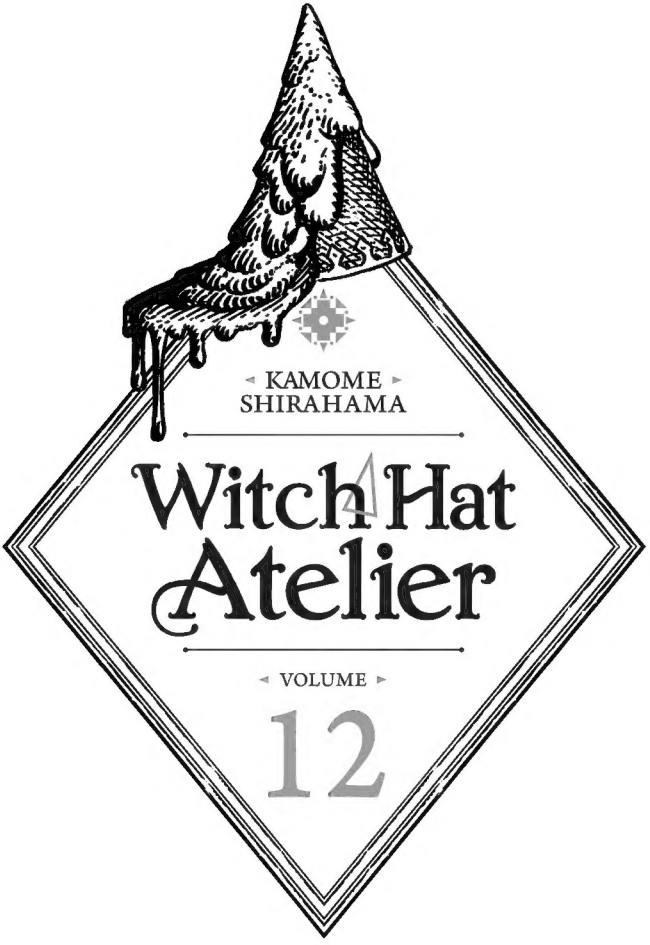
Will Eisner
COMIC INDUSTRY
AWARDS
WINNER

HARVEY AWARDS
WINNER

KAMOME
SHIRAHAMA

Witch Hat Atelier

VOLUME
12


KAMOME
SHIRAHAMA
Witch Hat
Atelier
VOLUME
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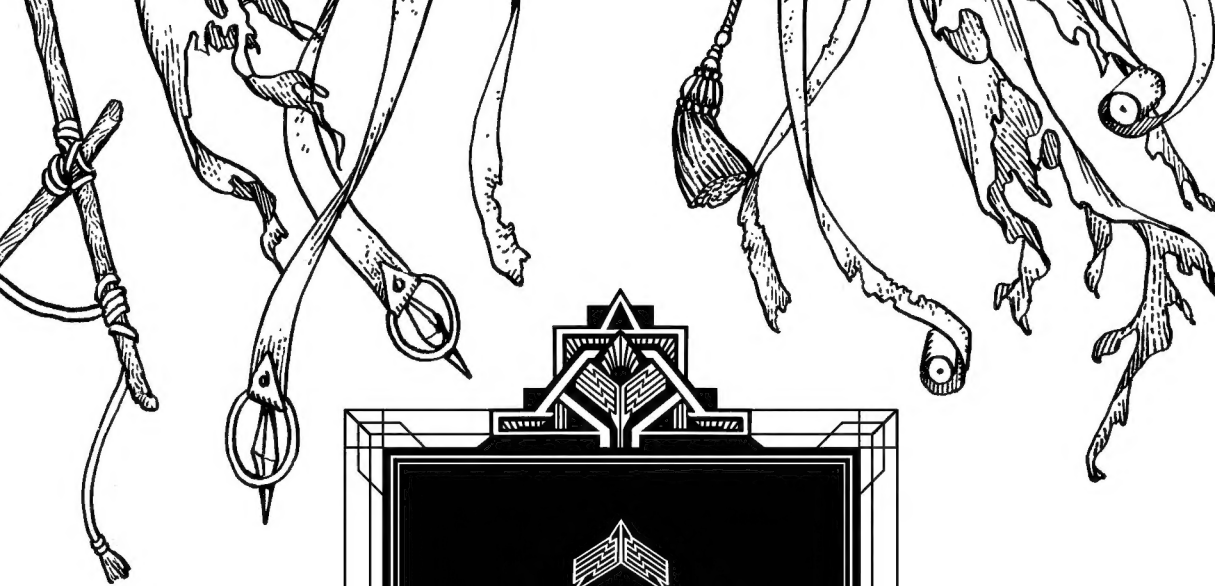

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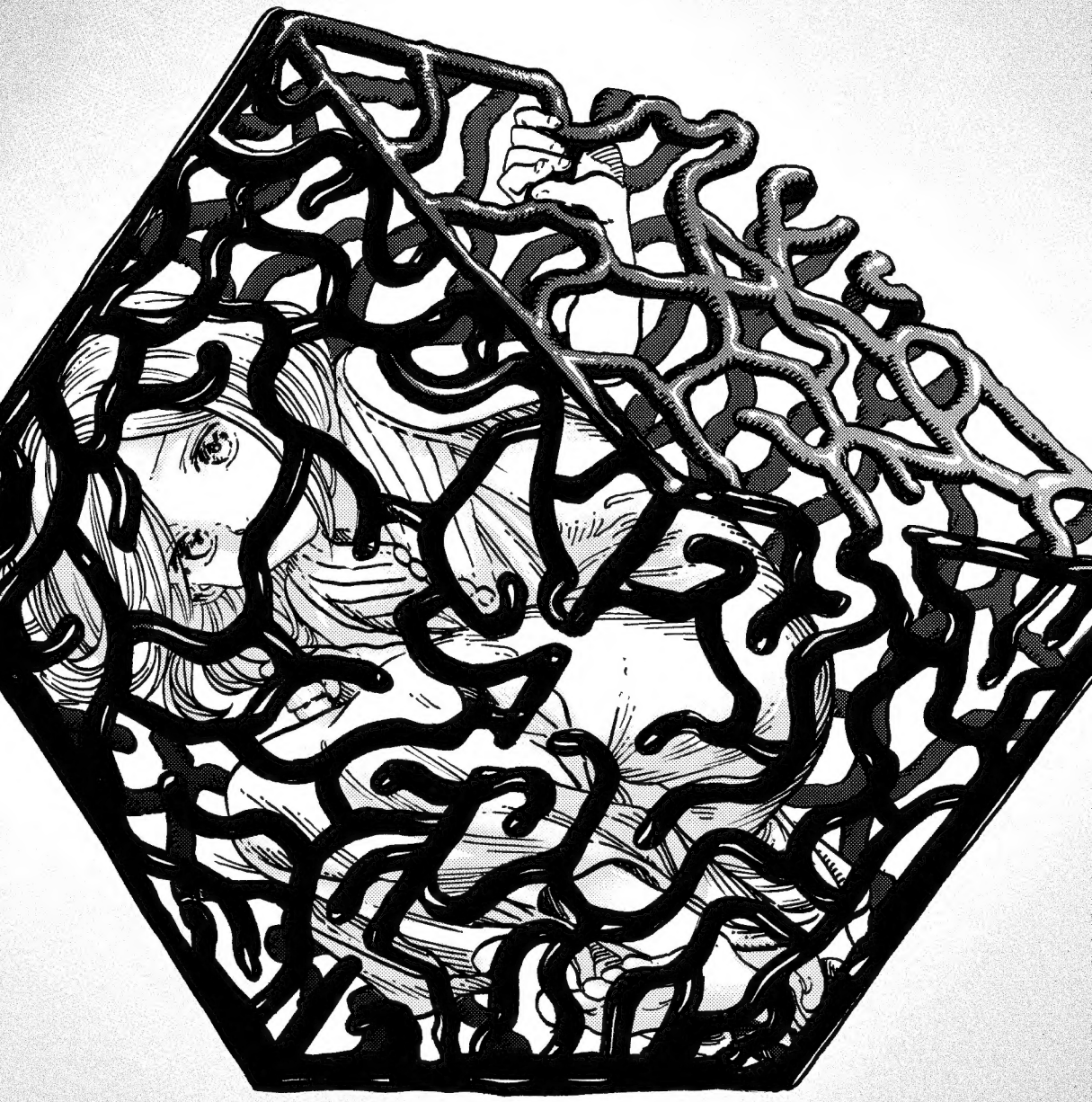
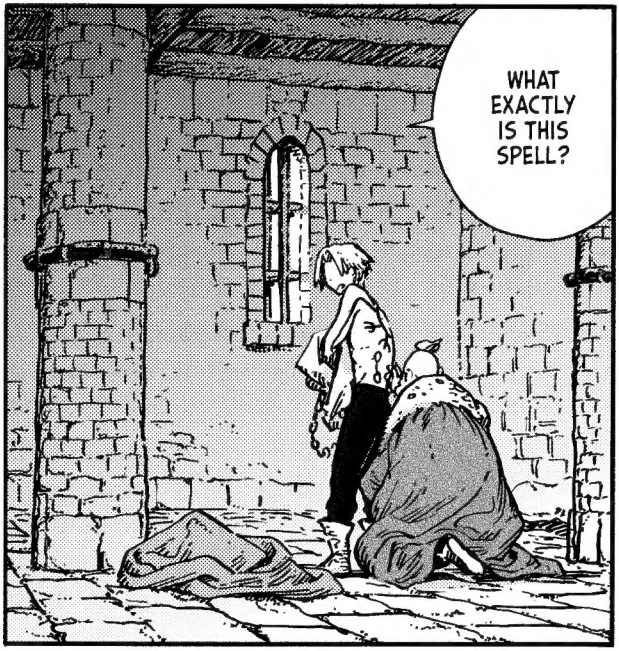


Chapter 63

A FEW CLOCK MARKS PRIOR ...

H-HEY, UH...
GRAMPS... ER... ENGENDALE, OR WHATEVER I SHOULD CALL YA...

I MEAN, YA GOT THE SIGNS COMIN' *OUTSIDE* THE RING!
PRETTY SURE THAT AIN'T HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO GO...

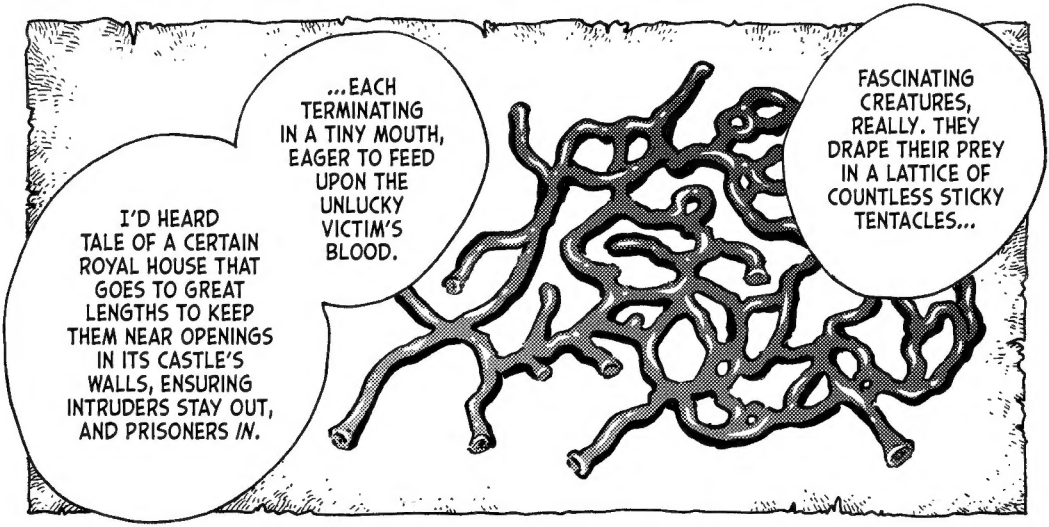

WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS SPELL?

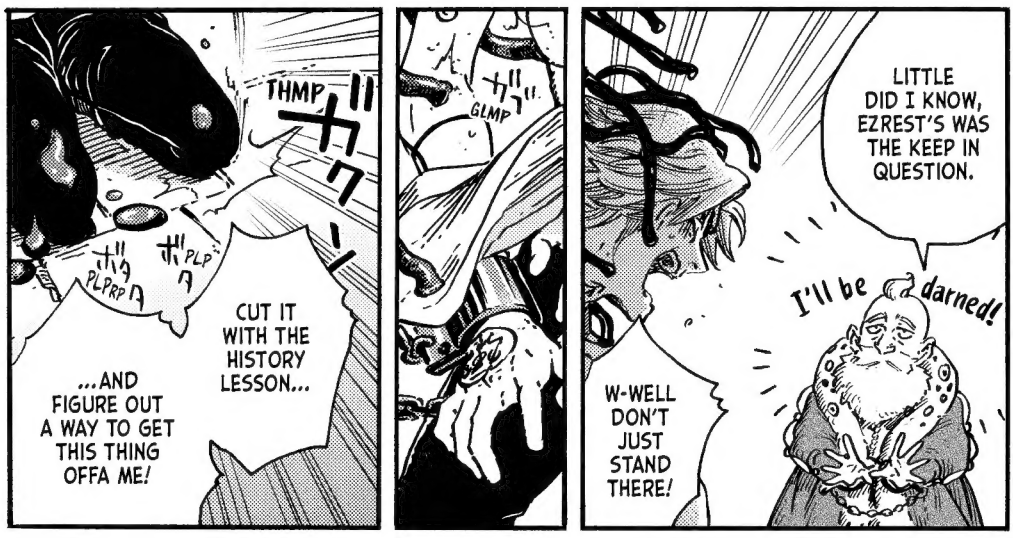
THEY DETERMINE JUST HOW FIRMLY A SPELL WILL EMBED ITSELF INTO THE FLESH.
IT IS A VERY OLD TECHNIQUE, ALL BUT LOST TO THE DAYS OF YORE.
THESE MARKINGS YOU MISTAKE FOR SIGNS ARE IN FACT CALLED *GLAIVES.*
EMBED ITSELF, HUH?
WE'RE DEEP INTO FORBIDDEN TERRITORY NOW...
YOU SURE HAVE SOME DISTURBIN' TRICKS UP YOUR SLEEVE...
IS IT 'CAUSE YOU'RE ONE OF THE WISE?
THE THREE OF YOU PROBABLY KNOW ALL KINDS OF STUFF.
THINGS THEY DON'T TEACH US REGULAR WI—
IT IS DONE.

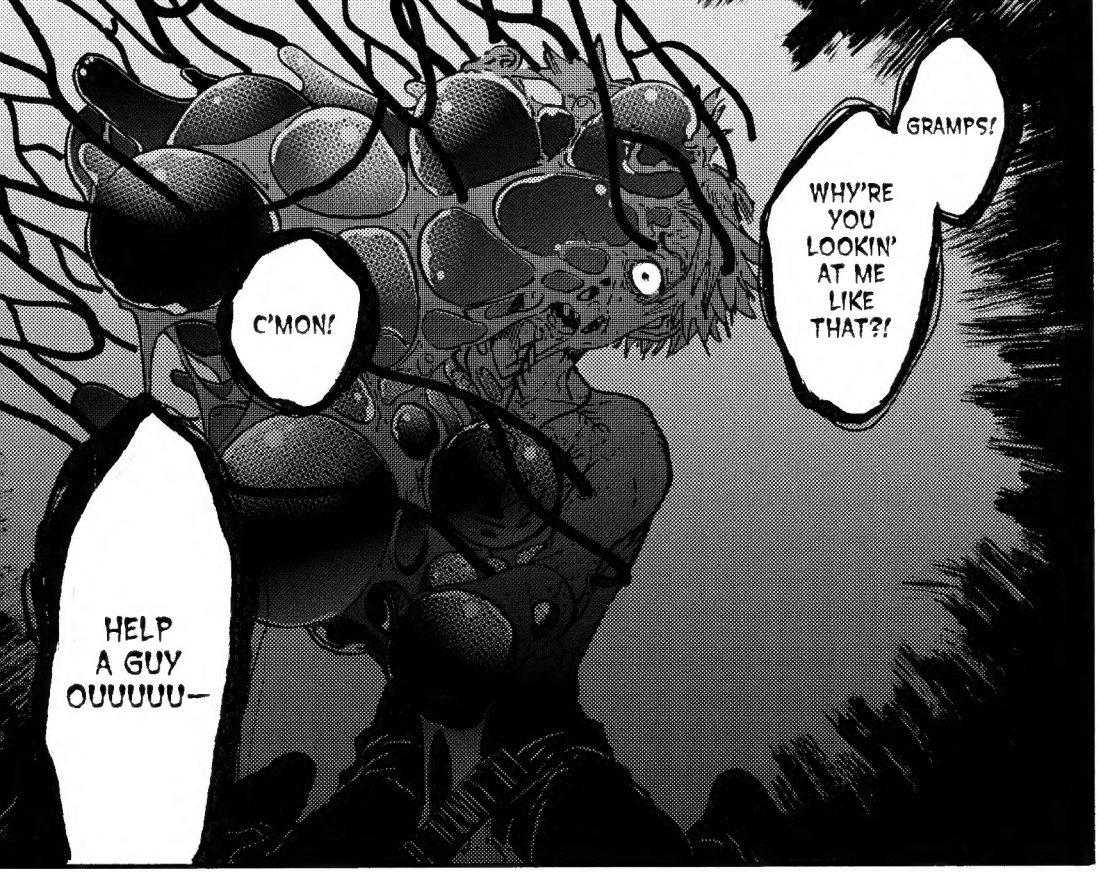
THIS SPELL WILL RENDER YOUR BODY INTO SLIME. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SLIDE THROUGH EVEN THE SMALLEST CREVICE WITH EASE.
THE RING IS ALREADY CLOSED.
ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO STRETCH YOUR HAND TO OPEN AIR.
THE SEAL SHOULD ACTIVATE ONCE IT'S BEYOND THE STONE.
H-HANG ON...
YOU'RE SURE THIS IS SAFE, RIGHT? I'LL BE ABLE TO TURN BACK?
I MEAN, NO DISRESPECT TO THE WISE ONES, BUT—
SHOVE
キャう
SHOVE
キャう
ENOUGH! NOW IS NO TIME FOR SECOND THOUGHTS!
YOU WERE THE ONE COMMITTED TO DOING WHATEVER IT TAKES!
YEAH, BUT I DIDN'T THINK THAT WOULD INCLUDE...!

I MEAN, HOW AM I GONNA GET MY REVENGE ON THOSE BLASTED KNIGHTS IF I'M MADE OF SLIME?!
CAN'T YOU TURN ME INTO SOMETHING COOL?
LIKE A FEROCIOUS DRAGON, OR...?
SH
LRP
SHVR
WH...?! OH, GROSS! WHAT IS THIS THING?!
I THINK IT BIT ME!
UGH! SHOO! GET AWAY FROM ME!

A WHAT?!
HRM...
A VALANCE LEECH.


I'D HEARD TALE OF A CERTAIN ROYAL HOUSE THAT GOES TO GREAT LENGTHS TO KEEP THEM NEAR OPENINGS IN ITS CASTLE'S WALLS, ENSURING INTRUDERS STAY OUT, AND PRISONERS IN.
...EACH TERMINATING IN A TINY MOUTH, EAGER TO FEED UPON THE UNLUCKY VICTIM'S BLOOD.
FASCINATING CREATURES, REALLY. THEY DRAPE THEIR PREY IN A LATTICE OF COUNTLESS STICKY TENTACLES...


THMP
PLPRP
PLP
...AND FIGURE OUT A WAY TO GET THIS THING OFFA ME!
CUT IT WITH THE HISTORY LESSON...
GLMP
W-WELL DON'T JUST STAND THERE!
LITTLE DID I KNOW, EZREST'S WAS THE KEEP IN QUESTION.
I'll be darned!


GRAMPS!
WHY'RE YOU LOOKIN' AT ME LIKE THAT?!
C'MON!
HELP A GUY OUUUUU—

THOOOM

DID YOU HEAR THAT?
SOUNDED LIKE AN EXPLOSION.
AH, IT'S PROBABLY THE FESTIVAL. SILVER EVE'S ALWAYS LOUD.
THE DRAGONS HAVE BEEN RESTLESS ALL EVENING.

THEIR DORSAL SAILS ARE ON END, AND NOW THEIR THROATS ARE RUMBLING, TOO. SOMETHING'S NOT RI—
NO. THIS IS MORE THAN A FEW BANGS FROM THE PROCESSION.
GH...!

SEEMS MY PLAN GOT A BIT OUT OF HAND.
...
SKSH
A POTENT REMINDER OF THE TRUE REASON...
...OUR ART'S BEEN THOROUGHLY DIVORCED FROM WAR, MEDICINE, OR ANY OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES ADJACENT TO OPEN WOUNDS.
FWAP
FWAP
FAR TOO HARD TO PREDICT...
...JUST HOW WILDLY A SPELL WILL REACT, SHOULD THE WOODCRUOR INTERMINGLE WITH HUMAN BLOOD.

TRULY, I DIDN'T INTEND FOR SUCH COMMOTION...
BUT IT DOES SERVE TO MASK MY ESCAPE.
LET'S LEAVE THE LEECH BE. LET IT SOW SOME CHAOS IN THE CITY.
GLORP
SPLAT
IN ANY CASE, THE MOMENT IT FED UPON THAT FOOL'S BLOOD...
...THE SPELL WAS ALTERED BEYOND CONTROL.
NOT A SOUL AMONG US CAN PREDICT THE EXTENT OF IT NOW.

WH...
WHAT IS THAT
THING?!
HUH...?!

CUSTAS...!
HEY! COCO!
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOIN' ON?!
DID MAGIC MAKE THAT THING? IS IT PART OF THE PROCESSION?!
Y...YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, EITHER? I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU OR ININIA...
NO! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY-THING LIKE IT!
IT SEEMS TO BE CAUSING A STIR AMONG THE GROWN-UPS, TOO...
MAYBE... MAYBE IT'S NOT A SPELL AT ALL?

BECAUSE IF THAT IS SOME KIND OF MAGIC...
...THE SEAL USED TO CAST IT WOULD HAVE TO BE ENOR—
"IT TAKES POWERFUL MAGIC TO ALTER THE LANDSCAPE ITSELF"...
"ALL SUCH ABOMINATIONS ARE SPELLS OF WAR, COMPOSED IN THE DAYS OF CHAOS PRECEDING THE PACT."
WHAT IF THIS IS LIKE THAT TIME AT THE STAIRCASE RIVER?
SOME SMALLER SPELL THAT GOT COMPLETELY OUT OF HAND...!
BUT THAT ONLY EVER HAPPENED TO ME ONCE...
...AND I HAVEN'T DRAWN ANYTHING ODAY THAT OULD—
COCO!

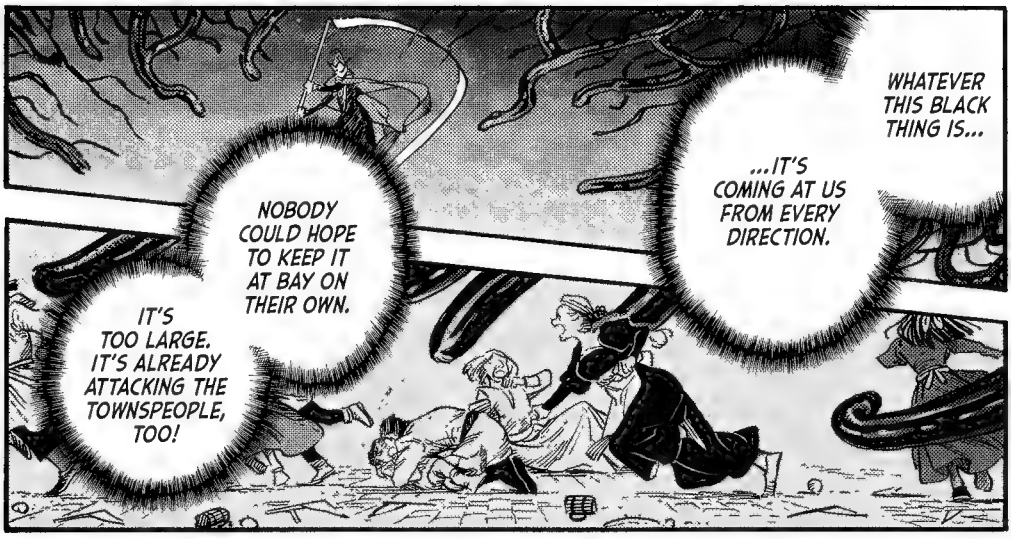
ZWRM

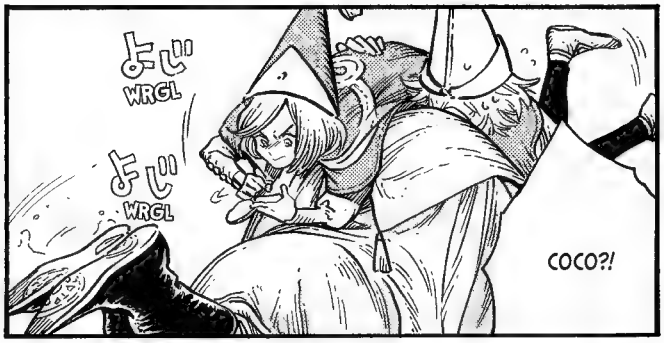
WH...?
FMP
VWIK

FLITTING OFF...
...WITHOUT REGARD FOR DANGER... WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU ABOUT BEING RECKLESS WITH YOUR MAGIC?
THOUGH I MUST ADMIT, I MAY NOT SET THE BEST EXAMPLE IN THAT REGARD.
HUH? HE'S GONE.
I HOPE THAT MEANS HE GOT AWAY...
MASTER!
AND WHAT ABOUT CUSTAS?
BUT SOME OF THE OTHER WITCHES I SAW...
NOT AT ALL!
I'M JUST GLAD I MADE IT IN TIME. YOU'RE NOT INJURED, ARE YOU?

2RSH
IF YOU'VE SECURED YOUR APPRENTICE, MIGHT I IMPLORE YOU TO RETURN TO SOLID GROUND?
EASTHIES!

ZR
R
SH
GO, YOU TWO! THE CITIZENS NEED YOUR HELP, NOT I.
MINDING BYSTANDERS ONLY COMPLICATES THE EFFORT!
SWR
FSH
LEAVE BATTLE TO THE ORDER! IT IS OUR DOMAIN!
EASTHIES...
HOW STRONG YOU ARE...! BUT...


WHATEVER THIS BLACK THING IS...
...IT'S COMING AT US FROM EVERY DIRECTION.
NOBODY COULD HOPE TO KEEP IT AT BAY ON THEIR OWN.
IT'S TOO LARGE. IT'S ALREADY ATTACKING THE TOWNSPEOPLE, TOO!


よじ
WRGL
よじ
WRGL
COCO?!

ACK!
SHRF

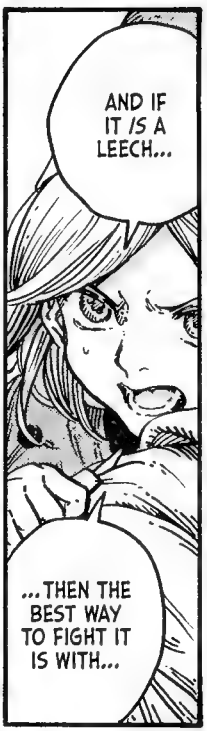
IF YOU NEED TO GIVE A SPELL A LOT OF OOMPH...
...JUST FILL THE SEAL WITH ONE LONG, PERFECTLY STRAIGHT LINE!

THERE WERE MORE BELOW?!
THAP
THAP
VRRRSH
I HADN'T EVEN SEEN THEM...
DID THAT CHILD...
...JUST SAVE MY LIFE?
MISTER EASTHIES?!
UM!

THE ENDS OF THE TENTACLES! THEY'RE LINED WITH RINGS OF TEETH!
WHEN THAT THING CAME AFTER ME, I SAW SOMETHING!
IT MIGHT BE SOME KIND OF *LEECH!*

...THEY WERE ALL OVER THE NEARBY FOREST. SOMETIMES A FEW EVEN MADE IT TO THE VILLAGE.
BACK HOME, USUALLY RIGHT AFTER IT RAINED...
I'VE SEEN RINGS LIKE THAT BEFORE.

DID SOMEBODY CALL FOR *FIRE* AND *SALT?*


AND IF IT *IS* A LEECH...
...THEN THE BEST WAY TO FIGHT IT IS WITH...

LISTEN CLOSE, COCO.
IF A LEECH EVER STICKS ITSELF TO YOU, HERE'S WHAT YOU DO...

NOW THERE...
...IS A COMBINA-TION...
...WHERE A WITCH LIKE *ME* MIGHT COME IN HANDY.

Witch Hat Atelier

Chapter 64

WHOAAA...
SO *THAT'S* WHAT IT'S FOR! THEIR WATERSCULPTURES ARE ALL HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE SEAL!

...AND PRACTICALLY *BEGGED* ME TO FLY TO A SEWER OUTLET AT THE EDGE OF TOWN AND CLOSE THE RING...I THOUGHT SHE WAS OUT OF HER MIND!
WHEN AGOTT THRUST A SPELL WITH A GUIDANCE SIGIL INTO MY HANDS...

HM?
PRETTY CLEVER STUFF, DON'T YOU THINK?
RIGHT, MASTER?
...THOSE KIDS SURE COME UP WITH SOME CREATIVE IDEAS!
BUT SEEING THIS, I GOTTA ADMIT...
YEAH, YEAH. THIS AGAIN. THANKS VERY MUCH, ET CETERA, ET CETERA...
SORRY. I WAS JUST THINKING TO MYSELF WHAT A TREMENDOUSLY SUPPORTIVE APPRENTICE I MUST HAVE, TO CHEERFULLY ACCEPT A SUDDEN REQUEST AND EXECUTE IT WITH APLOMB!
...
ALL THE MORE FOR SOMEONE TRAINING TO BE A WITCH!
...IS A QUALITY LIKE NO OTHER.
TO BE KNOWN AS A RELIABLE FRIEND...
I ASSURE YOU, I'M BEING QUITE SINCERE!

OH, WHAT I'D GIVE TO BE LIKE THEM...
...THEN WHY DO I YEARN FOR SOMETHING MORE?
WELL, IF IT'S SUCH A GOOD THING...
A RELIABLE FRIEND, HUH?
...ALWAYS SHOOTING STRAIGHT AHEAD, NEVER KNOWING A FLICKER OF UNCERTAINTY...
THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE IN THE WASTE-WATER...
...HUH?
WHAT'S THAT THING?
MASTER! YOU'D BETTER TAKE A LOOK AT THIS!
WHAT IS IT, JUJY?

DO YOU SEE IT? SOMETHING WEIRD IS FLOATING DOWNSTREAM.
KASPLK
HEEELP!
AHHH
MOMMY! DADDY!
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES ...!
AUGHHH!
HHH
EEEEEK!
HH!

SHRK
EEK!
WHIMP
DADDY?
DADDY! NO!
GAHHHH!
THIS WAY, EVERYONE! WE HAVE TO GET INDOORS!
CAN YOU WALK?!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SIR?
YOU STAY HERE! I'LL DIRECT OTHERS THIS WAY!
WE'LL BE READY FOR THEM!
THAK
BAR THE ENTRANCE!
SHUTTER THE WINDOWS!
THNK

LAST I SAW, SHE WAS WITH QIFREY AND OLRUGGIO.
THEY'LL KEEP HER SAFE. BE SURE OF IT.
MISTER NOLNOA!
WHAT ABOUT COCO?!
COCO WILL FIND HER WAY TO US. SHE'S GOT RICHEH'S SPELL.
YOU KNOW IT.
WHEN WE'RE APART, WE CAN ALWAYS USE OUR RINGS TO FIND EACH OTHER.
ONCE I MAKE COPIES FOR MISTER NOLNOA AND TARTAH, WE'LL BE COMPLETELY COVERED.
GASP
TARTAH! WHERE'S TARTAH?!
IS HE NOT HERE? I THOUGHT HE WAS WITH US...

IT'S TARTAH!
OH, MY PRECIOUS BOY!
ハァ!!
WHAM
I JUST FEEL SO DIZZY...
I CAN HARDLY STAND, THOUGH. I DON'T KNOW WHY...
DASH
WHAT HAPPENED?! WAS HE BITTEN?!
I'M OKAY, GRANDPA... REALLY...
I KNOW IT LOOKS BAD, BUT IT DOESN'T HURT AT ALL...

I-I CAN HELP WITH THAT!
IS THERE ANYONE HERE WHO CAN TEND TO THE WOUND?
FIND SOME SPACE IN THE BACK WHERE HE CAN LIE DOWN.
ME, TOO!
KRAKK
CREAK
VERY GOOD.
I'LL LEAVE YOU TO IT. WHERE SHALL I—
ZRK

DID IT GET TO TARTAH? IS THE BOY ALL RIGHT?!
ビッチ
SPLK
YOU...!
YOU'RE THE MAN FROM THE STAIRCASE RIVER!
...HE'S OUT THERE WITH THAT THING?!
CUSTAS?!
...it bit me!
AND THEN...
WAY UP IN THE SKY... WHEN WE WERE RUNNING AWAY, I STOPPED TO LOOK...
MISTER DAGDA... I SAW CUSTAS...!
M...

IT'S TOO DANGEROUS! IN THE NAME OF THE ORDER...!
DON'T BE A FOOL!
FWSH
GASP
...!
PLEASE. GO AFTER HIM. WE'LL MANAGE HERE.
GWIP
...!
WE MAY BE YOUNG, BUT WE'RE WITCHES, TOO!

YEAH! WE'LL MAKE SURE THAT DOOR HOLDS FAST TILL THE CAVALRY COMES!
THERE ARE LOTS MORE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO NEED YOUR HELP.
...
VERY WELL. STAND STRONG, YOUNG WITCHES.
P-TMP
GWIP
I HOPE COCO'S OKAY OUT THERE...
NO. OF COURSE SHE IS. WE CAN HANDLE IT...!
TARTAH! HANG IN THERE!
I DON'T GET IT. THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH.

WHY...?
WHY HASN'T THE BLEEDING STOPPED YET?!
YOU SAY THE VICTIMS FEEL NO PAIN, YET THE WOUNDS CANNOT BE STANCHED?
THEN IT'S A LEECH WE'RE DEALING WITH.
SNAP

YES. THE ENORMITY MAKES IT CLEAR ENOUGH. THIS IS A FAR CRY FROM THE ONES WE KEEP ON OUR WALLS.
SIRE... I'LL ADMIT THE LATTICE PATTERN DOES BRING TO MIND THAT OF A VALANCE LEECH, BUT...
IN FACT, NO MATTER HOW MUCH BLOOD IT HAS GORGED UPON...
IT'S FAR LARGER THAN *ANY* LEECH OF THIS WORLD OUGHT TO BE...

YOU MUST RETURN TO THE CASTLE WITH THE REST OF US!
MAJESTY! YOU'RE HEADED THE WRONG WAY!
VWRSH
I AM DEANREL DY EZREST!
I'LL DO NO SUCH THING.
HOLE MYSELF UP WHILE MY CITY BLEEDS?
THE KING OF LIFE DOES NOT FLEE WHEN HIS PEOPLE ARE IN PERIL.
KING OF THIS ESTUS AND DISCIPLE TO THE MYSTERIES OF MEDICINE AND MORTALITY.

DASH
FOR WHAT PURPOSE HAVE I HONED MY SKILLS IF I FAIL TO USE THEM NOW?
AND RIGHT NOW THEY LIE DYING IN THE STREETS.
LURCH
RMMJ
RMMJ
RMMJ
RMMJ
Is he drawing a spell...?
UM... LORD BELDARUIT?
TWCH
TWCH
SIRE! PLEASE SLOW DOWN!
YOU MUSTN'T BE WITHOUT YOUR ROYAL GUARD!
Waaait!
GRMMMM!
OVR
OVR
OH, CONFOUND THAT HOTHEADED YOUNG KING!

DUN
DUN
ガシャ VRM
シャキ KRASHNK
SEALCHAIR!
ガシャ KRVRMMM
ACTIVATE!
ULTIMATE BELDA-FORMATION— GALLOPING FORCE!
ベルタウルート
BEHOLD THE BELDA-TAUR!
KRTHMP KRTHMP KRTHMP
ウオー RAAU
KRTHMP KRTHMP
GHHH!
HE'S JUST AS BAD AS THE KING...
What about him is supposed to be wise?!
HOW DARE YOU RUN OFF ON YOUR OWN!
GET BACK HERE, YOU MADDENING MONARCH!

KNOWING MY HUSBAND, HE INTENDS TO PROVIDE AID. WHILE VALANCE LEECHES OF TYPICAL SIZE ARE A NUISANCE, RARELY WILL THEY KILL A MAN.
WHERE ARE THEY GOING?!
WH... WHY DID THEY TURN AROUND?!
I BELIEVE I OVERHEARD THEM DISCUSSING THE WESTERN HEALING SPIRE...
BUT A BITE FROM A CREATURE AS MASSIVE AS THE ONE OUT THERE...
WELL, I SHOULD THINK THE QUANTITY OF BLOOD DRAWN WOULD BE A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH!
IF WE'RE TO SAVE THE PEOPLE, EVERY MOMENT COUNTS! THIS IS A BATTLE AGAINST THE CLOCK!
AND THE WESTERN SPIRE HAS A STORE OF BLOOD, KEPT FRESH BY A SPELL THAT STOPS TIME.
DEAN MUST BE HEADED THERE TO READY TRANSFUSIONS FOR AS MANY VICTIMS AS POSSIBLE.

IF WE CAN BUT FERRY THE MOST GRAVELY WOUNDED TO THE WESTERN SPIRE, WE MAY YET SAVE THEM...
A MEDICAL TECHNIQUE. BLOOD FROM HEALTHY CITIZENS IS ADMINISTERED TO PATIENTS WHO LOSE TOO MUCH OF THEIR OWN.
FORGIVE ME, MAJESTY. "TRANS-FUSIONS" ...?
!
WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, O WISE ONE?
WHAT A CHANCE FOR THE BOUNDLESS POWER OF MAGIC TO SHINE.
WHY, IF ONE HAS THE POWER TO SAVE, SURELY IT'S ONLY RIGHT TO EXERCISE IT, NO?
...
LORD LAGRAH.
IT SEEMS WE ARE IN THE WITCHES' CARE ONCE MORE.
INDEED! AND WHEN THERE'S SO LITTLE WE CAN DO OUR-SELVES...

MIGHT I MAKE A SUGGES-TION?
DURING THE PROCESSION, I NOTICED A NUMBER OF CANVAS BANNERS...
...WITH ROUND OPENINGS THAT ALLOWED THE WITCHES TO FLIT TO AND FRO.
FORGIVE ME IF I PRESUME TOO MUCH, O WISE IN FRIEND-SHIPS...
...BUT COULD THOSE DEVICES NOT BE OF SERVICE TO US NOW?
WE COULD LEAD CITIZENS TO SAFETY AND TRANSPORT THE INJURED TO THE SPIRE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.
AN EXCELLENT SUGGESTION, YOUNG PRINCE.
BUT I REGRET TO SAY, THE WINDOWWAYS ONLY FUNCTION IN PAIRS...

...AND WE MAY BE HARD PRESSED TO DEAL WITH WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE.
SHLRP
I...SEE.
SO THE POSSIBILITIES OF MAGIC...
SKRP
...ARE NOT AS LIMITLESS AS I HAD HOPED.

THIS BOY...
...REMINDS ME OF HIS FATHER...
EYES THAT GLINT... WITH THOUGHTS UNKNOWN.
WHEN THOSE TWO DRAW NEAR, I FIND MYSELF CAREFULLY CHOOSING EVERY WORD I UTTER.
IS IT BECAUSE THE SECRET WE SO FIERCELY GUARD...
...WEIGHS HEAVILY ON OUR CONSCIENCE?
RAISE YOUR SILVERWHITE PENNANTS, KNIGHTS!
GASP!

WE ARE THE PEOPLES' SPEARS!
WAVE THEM HIGH!
VRSH
WE ARE THEIR SWORDS!
AND THEIR SHIELDS!
KRSPLRK
WE ARE THEIR BANNERS TO RALLY UNDER...
...RAAGH!

I KNOW I'M NOT MUCH USE, SAVE FOR MOMENTS LIKE THIS, ANYWAY!
PLIP
PLIP.
PLIPLIP.
SHLRP
HUP
GOOD NEWS. I GOT A WINDOWWAY BACK.
...!
I MEAN...
...WHAT'S THE POINT OF A FLAG-BEARER UNLESS HE'S MARCHING OUT FRONT...
...WAVING THE STANDARD FOR ALL TO SEE?

Witch Hat Atelier

Chapter 65

WE GOT ONE BACK! ONE OF THE WINDOWWAYS IS CLEAR AGAIN!
UTOWIN CUT THROUGH THE TENTACLES ON THE OTHER SIDE!
YOU'RE DRENCHED IN BLOOD.
I DO HOPE IT'S NOT YOUR OWN.
WELL FOUGHT, UTOWIN.

SPRRRSH
EVERY JAB SPROUTS A NEW FOUNTAIN.
HARD TO BELIEVE HOW MUCH THIS VILE THING HAS SUCKED UP.
PLP
PLP
PLP
PLP
NAH. THIS ALL CAME OUTTA THE LEECH. NOT ME.
WORRIED? THAT'S A NEW ONE.
'COURSE, I GUESS IT USED TO BELONG TO *SOMEBODY*...
SWK
YES, AND THE MORE VICTIMS IT GORGES UPON, THE LARGER IT GROWS.
WE MUST REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS—NOT ONLY TO PARE IT DOWN, BUT TO GET THE CITIZENS FAR FROM ITS REACH.
IF WE DO NOT STEM IT SOMEHOW, WE'LL EXHAUST OURSELVES BEFORE THE BATTLE IS THROUGH.

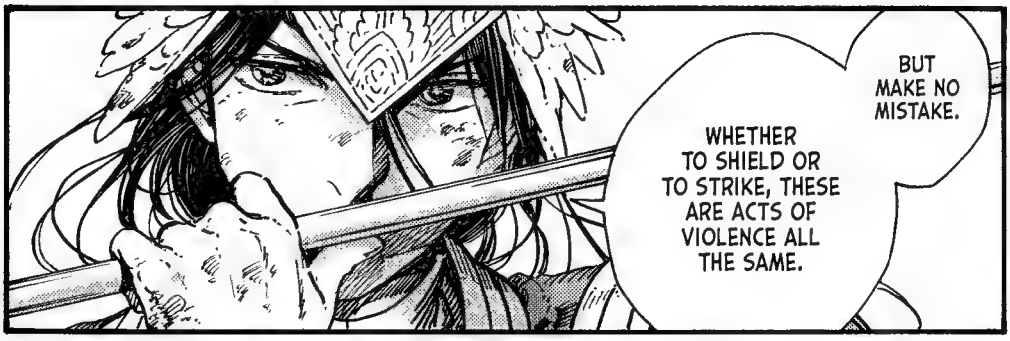
How many did we bring...?
DO YOU HAVE ANY CLUE WHAT I WENT THROUGH JUST TO GET THE ONE?!
THEN YOU'LL BE BETTER PREPARED FOR THE NEXT.
I GOTTA GO THROUGH THAT AGAIN?!
WE'LL NEED EVERY ROUTE TO SAFETY WE CAN MUSTER.
OUR FIRST CONCERN IS THE WINDOWWAYS. SECURE THEM ALL.
ALL OF THEM?!
WE CANNOT ASK THEM TO MANAGE IT ALL!
BRMMM
SWRP

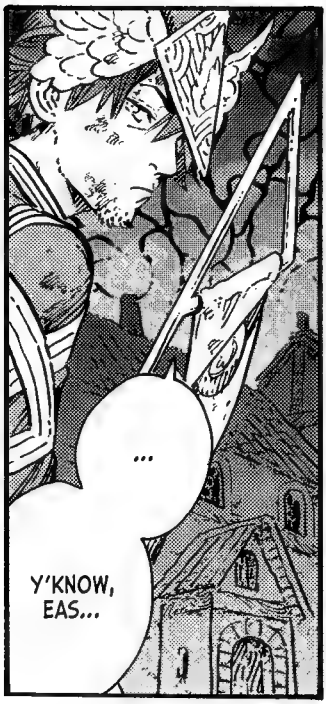
トォー
BWOOSH
BWUF
BWUR

PRECISELY. THEY CAN *WAR.*
LOOKS TO ME THEY'RE DOING JUST FINE. GOT THEIR OWN LITTLE WAR GOING ON.
NOW YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT *THEM?*

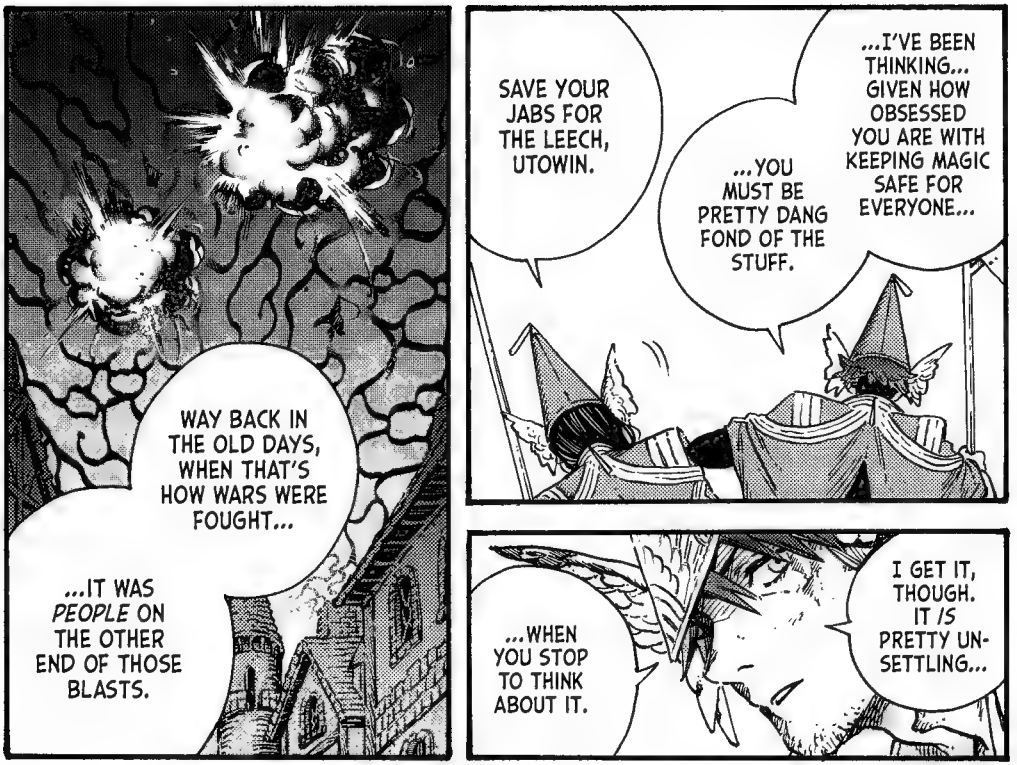
I WOULD MUCH PREFER TO MINIMIZE WHAT THE OUTSIDERS SEE OF OUR SPELLS...
...AND HOW EFFECTIVE THEY CAN BE WHEN CRAFTED FOR COMBAT.
BUT IT KINDA STRIKES ME AS TOO LITTLE TOO LATE.
IT'S A NICE THOUGHT ...
SHRK
AH. YOUR EMPHASIS ON EVACUATION IS MAKING A LOT MORE SENSE NOW.
THIS IS ABOUT KEEPING 'EM *AWAY* AS MUCH AS ABOUT KEEPING 'EM *SAFE*.

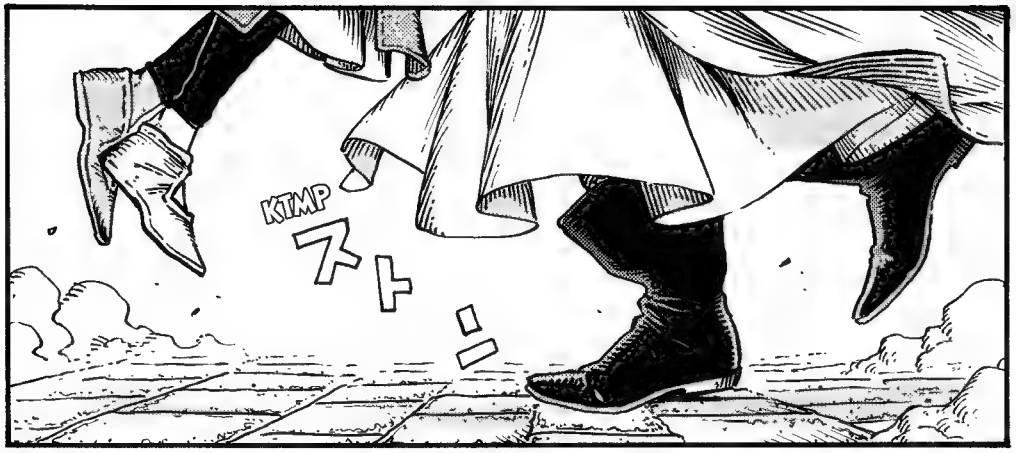
AND DISTASTEFUL AS IT IS...
...EVERY MAW THEY KEEP OCCUPIED IS ONE LESS CIVILIAN BITTEN. AT PRESENT, IT'S THE BEST WAY TO LIMIT THE CITY'S SUFFERING.
I DOUBT THEY WILL LISTEN.
WANT ME TO TELL 'EM TO LAY OFF THE OFFENSE?


WHETHER TO SHIELD OR TO STRIKE, THESE ARE ACTS OF VIOLENCE ALL THE SAME.
BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE.


...
Y'KNOW, EAS...

PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO SEE...
...HOW READILY MAGIC LENDS ITSELF TO BATTLE.
THIS IS WHY WE ENDEAVOR TO LIMIT SUCH USES TO OUR HANDS ALONE.


WAY BACK IN THE OLD DAYS, WHEN THAT'S HOW WARS WERE FOUGHT...
...IT WAS *PEOPLE* ON THE OTHER END OF THOSE BLASTS.
SAVE YOUR JABS FOR THE LEECH, UTOWIN.
...YOU MUST BE PRETTY DANG FOND OF THE STUFF.
...I'VE BEEN THINKING... GIVEN HOW OBSESSED YOU ARE WITH KEEPING MAGIC SAFE FOR EVERYONE...
...WHEN YOU STOP TO THINK ABOUT IT.
I GET IT, THOUGH. IT *IS* PRETTY UN-SETTLING...


KTMP
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ン

ONCE I SEE YOU SAFELY TO HIS CARE, I MUST RETURN TO THE FRAY.
MISTER NOLNOA WILL HAVE FOUND SOMEWHERE TO SHELTER WITH THE GIRLS.
BUT... BUT...!
...
NO! I WANNA GO WITH YOU!
OUT OF THE QUESTION.
YOU ARE TO STAY WITH THE OTHERS TILL I RETURN.

TELL ME TRUE, COCO. DOES YOUR REFUSAL TO HIDE HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS BANGLE?
!

UM...!
SWIP
UH...!
I HAD A FEELING YOU TWO WERE HIDING SOMETHING.
OR DO YOU HESITATE BECAUSE TARTAH HAS SWORN YOU TO SECRECY?
IS IT ME YOU CANNOT TELL?
...SINCE THE EVENING YOU INSISTED ON BEING PART OF THE PROCESSION.
IN FACT, EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR BEHAVIOR HAS FELT TERRIBLY OFF...
S...
SO THIS WHOLE TIME...
...YOU KNEW, BUT YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING?
!
GASP

IS THERE NOTHING I CAN DO TO CONVINCE YOU?
HAVE I SHOWN MYSELF TO BE SO UNDESERVING OF YOUR FAITH?
N-NO... I MEAN... NOT EXACTLY...
I HAD INTENDED TO WAIT UNTIL THE TWO OF YOU WERE READY TO OPEN UP OF YOUR OWN ACCORD.
BUT IF YOUR PLANS ARE DANGEROUS, I CANNOT BE SO GENEROUS.
IT'S JUST THAT CUSTAS DOESN'T TRUST THE OTHER WITCHES...
...AND EVEN TARTAH'S HAVING DOUBTS ABOUT THE WAY GROWN-UPS DO THINGS.
STILL...
THE MASTER QIFREY I'VE COME TO KNOW IS...

MASTER QIFREY. I NEED YOUR HELP.

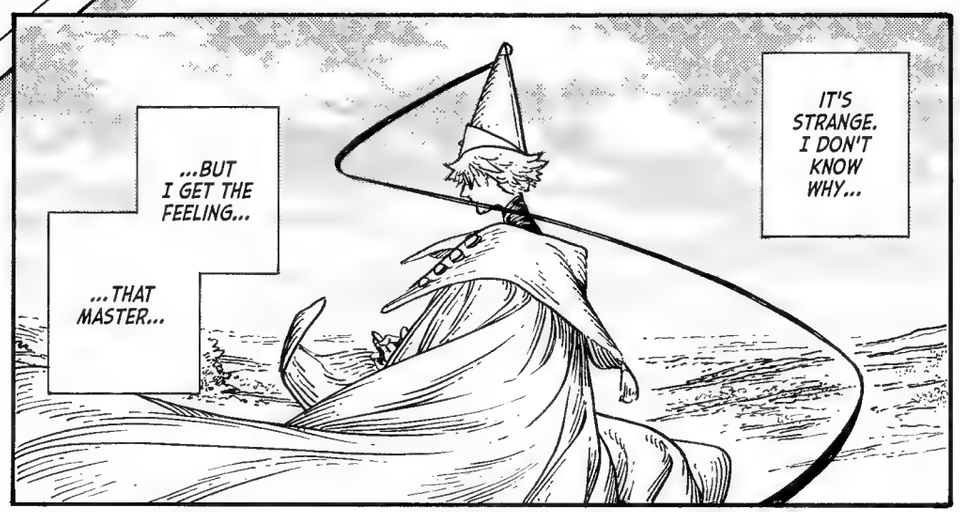
IT'S AS IF HE'S SEEN THE DARKNESS, LIKE I HAVE.
...IS JUST LIKE ME.

...THE RULES AND WHAT YOU FEEL IS RIGHT.
SOMETHING TELLS ME HE'S A WITCH THAT KNOWS THE DESPAIR OF BEING CAUGHT IN BETWEEN...

ZWRRSH
THE DAY I CAST THE SPELL ON MY MOTHER, HE WAS SUPPOSED TO ERASE MY MIND. INSTEAD, HE TOOK ME IN AS HIS APPRENTICE.

I'LL TRUST IN YOU, TOO, MASTER...
...SO PLEASE, DON'T MAKE UP YOUR MIND UNTIL YOU'VE HEARD EVERY-THING I HAVE TO SAY!

IF THERE'S ANYONE I CAN TRUST WITH THIS, IT'S MASTER QIFREY.
...HE IGNORED THE PRINCIPLES AGAIN AND LET EUINI GO FREE.
AND IN THE SERPENTBACK CAVE...

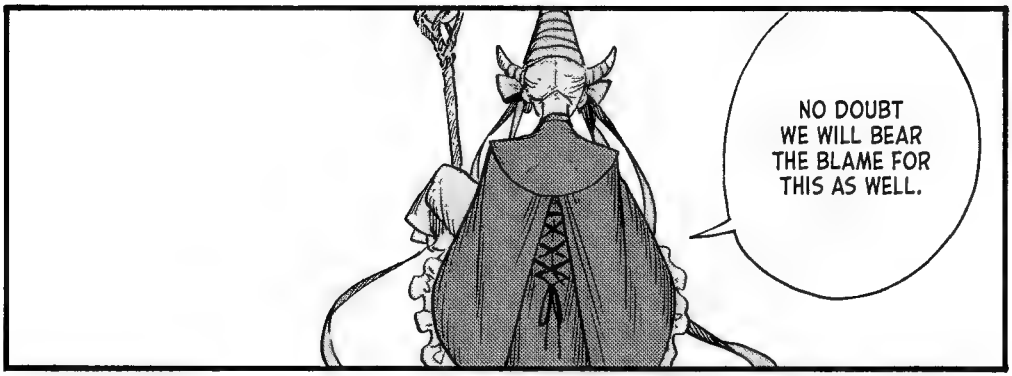

...BUT I GET THE FEELING...
...THAT MASTER...
IT'S STRANGE. I DON'T KNOW WHY...

I SEE...
SO THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.
COCO...
I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU. FOR BELIEVING IN ME ENOUGH TO SHARE.
NO NEED TO LOOK SO ANXIOUS.
HWUP
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
IT'S CERTAINLY NOT A CIRCUMSTANCE EASILY BROACHED WITH OTHER WITCHES.
FLUSTER
FLUSTER

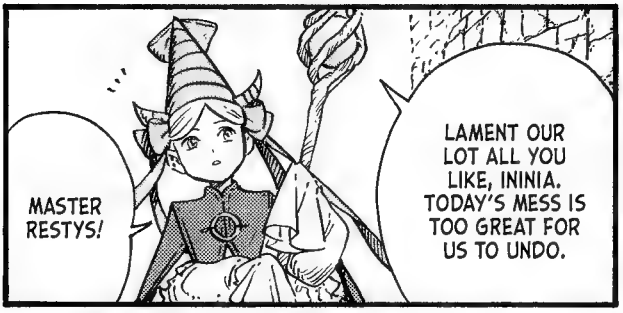
YOUR STRATEGY IS SOUND. IF WE CAN GET THE MAN INTO A DOCTOR'S CARE THE MOMENT THE SPELL FADES, WE MAY BE ABLE TO SAVE HIM.
WHY WOULDN'T I? MY APPRENTICE NEEDS ASSISTANCE SAVING THE LIFE OF SOMEONE SHE CARES DEEPLY ABOUT.
YOU MEAN YOU'LL HELP?!
...AND IDEALLY, TO FIND THEM BEFORE THE KNIGHTS MORALIS.
OUR FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS IS TO SEARCH FOR YOUR FRIENDS...
A MASTER DOES NOT TURN A BLIND EYE WHEN SOMEONE IN THEIR CARE CALLS UPON THEM.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE MUST ALWAYS BEAR IN MIND WHO WE ARE...
...AND WHAT WE STAND FOR.

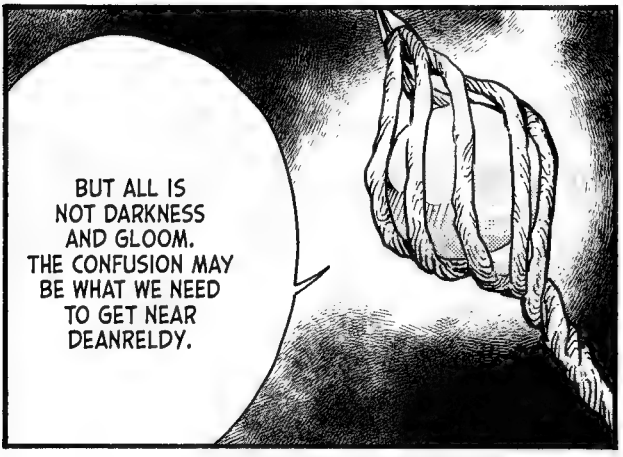
A BRIMMED CAP WITH THE APPEARANCE OF A YOUNG GIRL...
AND AT THIS VERY MOMENT...
...SHE'S HERE, AMONG THE CROWN CITY'S STREETS.
WE'RE WITCHES, AND WE USE OUR POWERS TO HELP!
RIGHT!
...RIGHT.

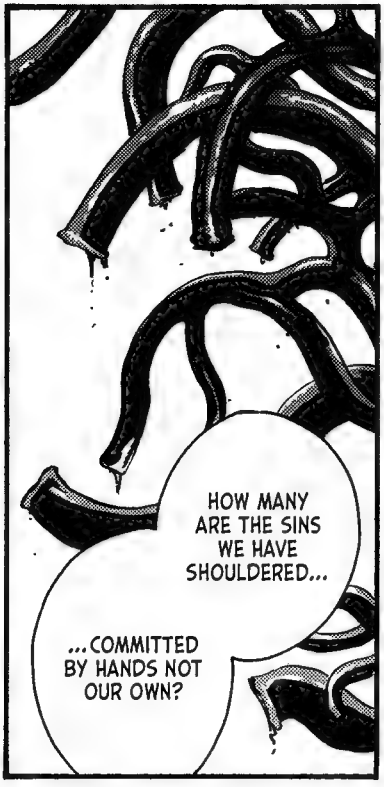
WHO IS THE *FOOL* WHO BROUGHT THAT CREATURE UPON US?
GRIT
WAS HE *TRYING* TO MAKE ME ANGRY?!
HOW? HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED?!
...
EVERYTHING WAS COMING TOGETHER.
JUST A FEW MOMENTS MORE. OUR GOAL WAS IN REACH!
SLRK...


NO DOUBT WE WILL BEAR THE BLAME FOR THIS AS WELL.

...AND IF EVER A SPELL IS DISTASTEFUL, IT MUST SURELY BE FORBIDDEN.
WE OF THE BRIMS ARE ALL THE BAD IN THE WORLD...


MASTER RESTYS!
LAMENT OUR LOT ALL YOU LIKE, ININIA. TODAY'S MESS IS TOO GREAT FOR US TO UNDO.

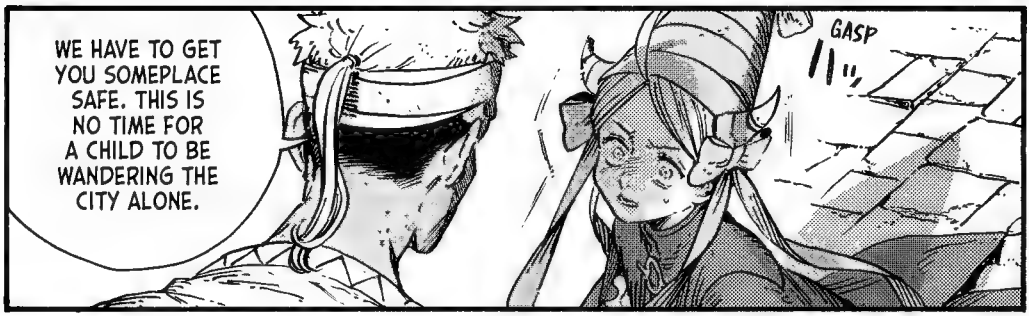

BUT ALL IS NOT DARKNESS AND GLOOM. THE CONFUSION MAY BE WHAT WE NEED TO GET NEAR DEANRELDY.


HOW MANY ARE THE SINS WE HAVE SHOULDERED...
...COMMITTED BY HANDS NOT OUR OWN?

BWRSH
MINE ARE THE PALMS TO DO YOUR BIDDING, AND THE SOLES TO TRAVEL WHERE YOU CANNOT.
GO, MY CHILD. FIND THE PENINSULAR KING AND SEE TO HIM OUR GIFT.
AND DO SO QUICKLY, BEFORE HE IS AGAIN HOLED UP IN HIS CASTLE.
YES, MASTER RESTYS.
I SHALL FIND THE KING. I WILL NOT DISAPPOINT.
FWSH

KERKRASH
KA-SNAP

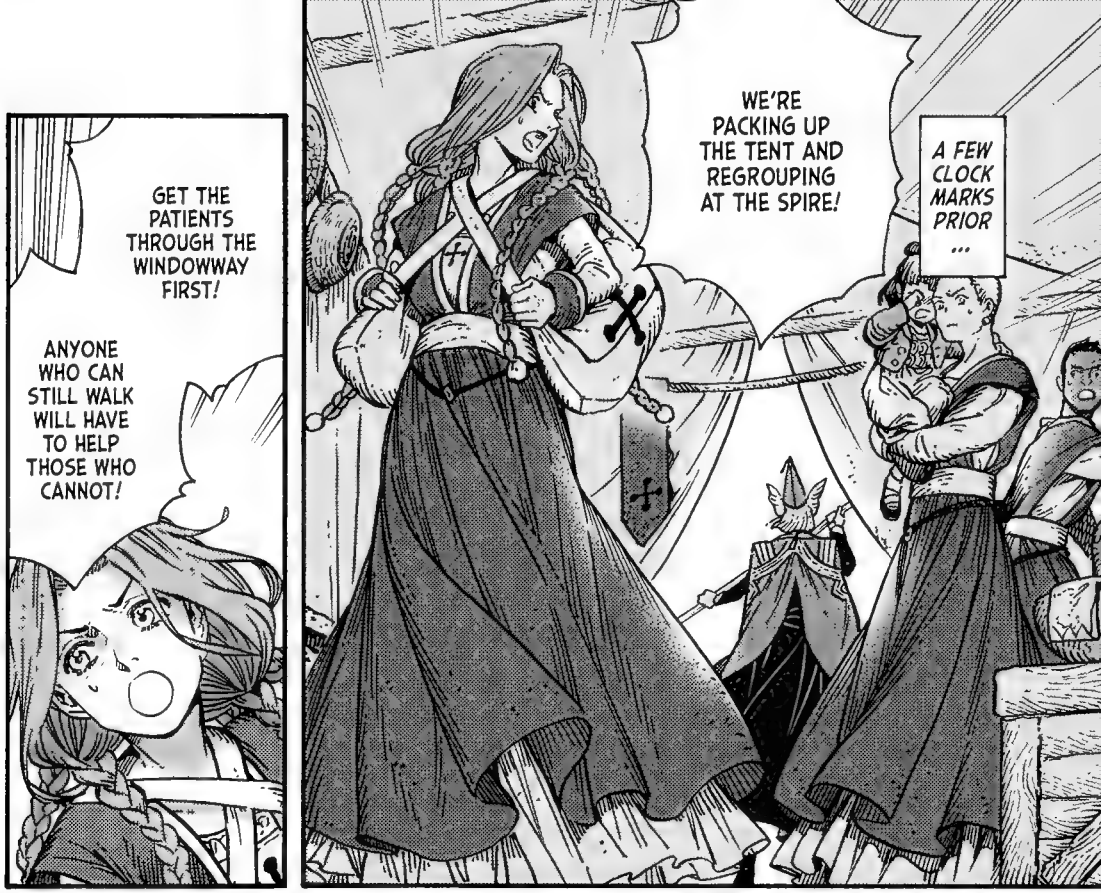
I WAS NEVER IN ANY DAN—
?!
IT DID *NOT* ALMOST HAVE ME!
YOU ALL RIGHT, KID?
OOF
THAT WAS CLOSE... IT ALMOST HAD YOU.
MY LINK TO MASTER RESTYS...!
!!

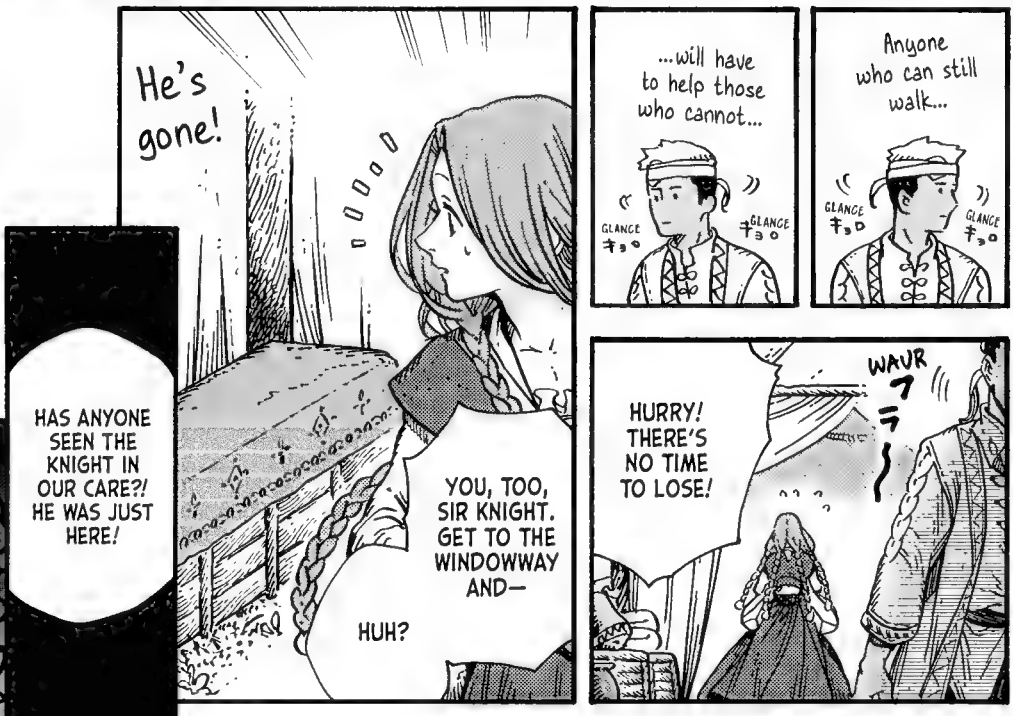

WE HAVE TO GET YOU SOMEPLACE SAFE. THIS IS NO TIME FOR A CHILD TO BE WANDERING THE CITY ALONE.
GASP
!!

I MAY HAVE LOST MY MEMORY, BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT MUCH.

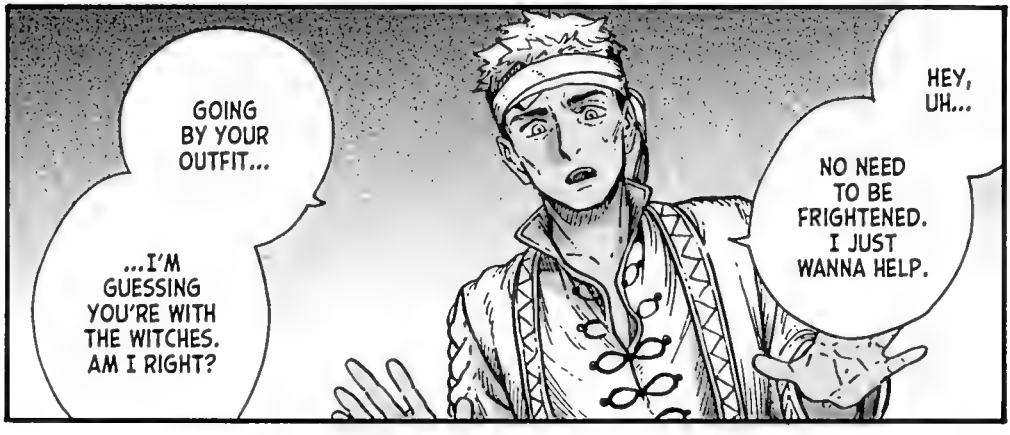
Witch Hat Atelier

Chapter 66

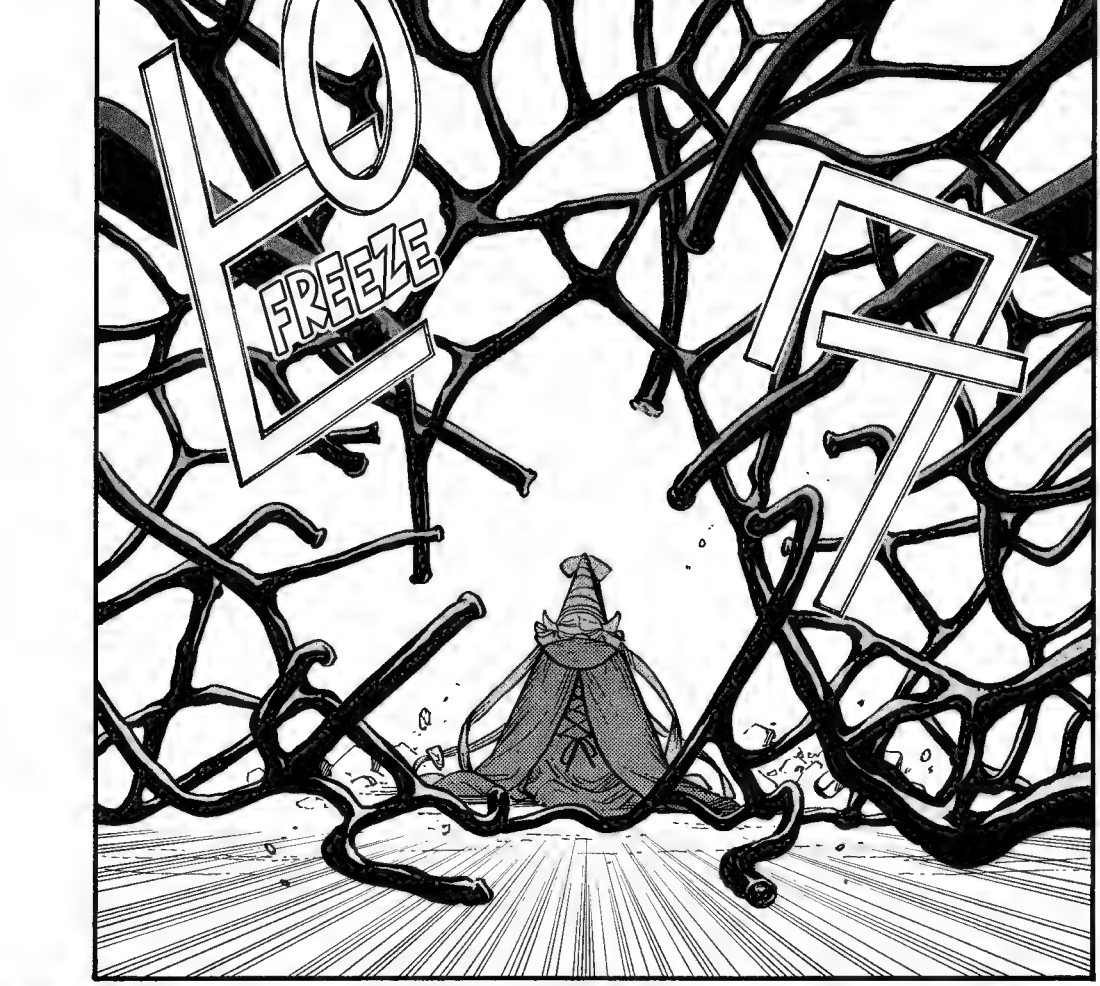

A FEW CLOCK MARKS PRIOR ...
WE'RE PACKING UP THE TENT AND REGROUPING AT THE SPIRE!
GET THE PATIENTS THROUGH THE WINDOWWAY FIRST!
ANYONE WHO CAN STILL WALK WILL HAVE TO HELP THOSE WHO CANNOT!


Anyone who can still walk...
GLANCE
GLANCE
...will have to help those who cannot...
GLANCE
GLANCE
WAUR
HURRY! THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE!
He's gone!
HUH?
YOU, TOO, SIR KNIGHT. GET TO THE WINDOWWAY AND—
HAS ANYONE SEEN THE KNIGHT IN OUR CARE?! HE WAS JUST HERE!

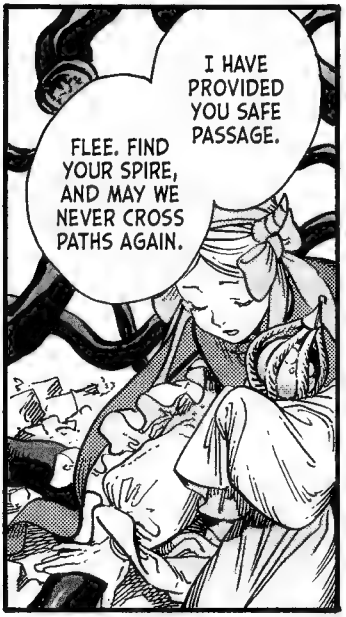
YOU'RE NOT HURT, I HOPE?
ARE YOU ABLE TO STAND?
...

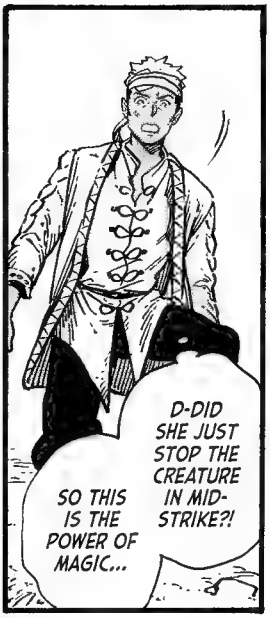

HEY, UH...
NO NEED TO BE FRIGHTENED. I JUST WANNA HELP.
GOING BY YOUR OUTFIT...
...I'M GUESSING YOU'RE WITH THE WITCHES. AM I RIGHT?

LUCKY FOR ME, I STILL REMEMBER THE LAYOUT OF THE CITY.
I SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN EVERYTHING I KNEW ABOUT MAGIC.
?
TRUTH IS, I USED TO BE ONE, TOO... OR SO I'M TOLD.
THE DOCTORS AT THE FESTIVAL WERE TELLING EVERYONE TO GO SHELTER AT THE HEALING SPIRE.
I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY. JUST FOLLOW ME, KID.
SWAMP
RMMJ
RMMJ
MY NAME IS NOT "KID." IT IS ININIA.
AND I MOST CERTAINLY DO NOT REQUIRE HELP FROM YOU.
SHRF

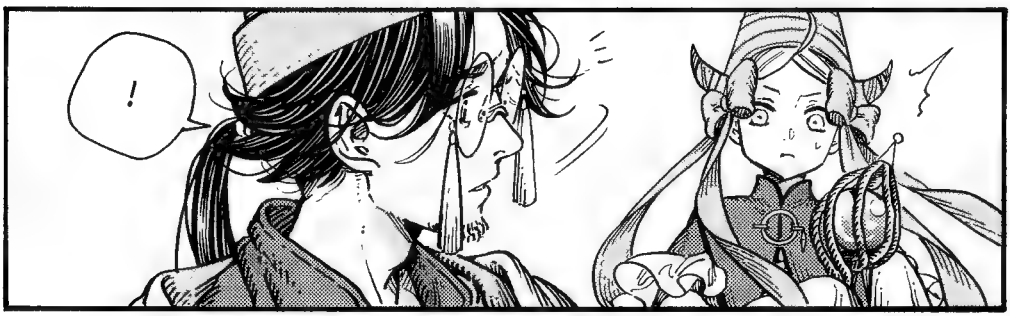

FREEZE

UNLIKE YOU, I STILL HAVE REASON TO BE HERE.


I HAVE PROVIDED YOU SAFE PASSAGE.
FLEE. FIND YOUR SPIRE, AND MAY WE NEVER CROSS PATHS AGAIN.


D-DID SHE JUST STOP THE CREATURE IN MID-STRIKE?!
SO THIS IS THE POWER OF MAGIC...

THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE SAFE!
I'VE BEEN LOOKING EVERYWHERE FOR YOU! THE WHOLE CITY'S IN TURMOIL!
SO THIS IS WHERE YOU WERT-AT!
G...
GALGA!


!

AND ALL THE WHILE, YOU'VE BEEN QUIETLY FINDING WAYS TO SAVE OTHERS.
DESPITE WHAT'S HAPPENED...
...YOU'RE STILL THE GALGA I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN.

IMAGINE MY SHOCK...
I LEFT FOR *ONE NIGHT* TO PICK UP SOME THINGS AT THE GREAT HALL THAT MIGHT SOLVE OUR ISSUE...
...ONLY TO COME BACK TO A CITY TURNED ENTIRELY ON ITS HEAD.
...
!
YOU SAY YOU WERE LOOKING FOR *ME*...? I, UH...THINK I REMEMBER YOU FROM THE DOCTORS' TENT, BUT...
...I TAKE IT WE KNOW EACH OTHER?
...
YES. WE MOST CERTAINLY DO. AND THE TWO OF US WERE VERY CLOSE.
AS CLOSE AS TWO PEOPLE MAY EVER BE.

!
IS THIS A WITCH'S OUTFIT?
THAT IS WHY I HOPED TO GIVE YOU THESE.
ZNSH
DON'T YOU SEE?! A MASTER AND HIS APPRENTICE ARE CONSIDERED BOUND AS TIGHTLY AS FAMILY FOR THE DURATION OF THE TRAINING!
I'D PLANNED TO GIVE THEM TO MY APPRENTICE SOMEDAY, IF I EVER DECIDED TO TAKE ONE ON...
PRECISELY. MY OWN SPARE ROBE AND POINTED CAP.

I SWEAR TO RESTORE YOUR MEMORIES...
...BUT FINDING A WAY WILL TAKE TIME, AND YOUR BANISHMENT LOOMS NEAR.
PLEASE, GALGA.
I KNOW IT'S A GREAT DEAL TO TAKE IN.
BUT FOR THE MOMENT, I CAN THINK OF NO OTHER MEANS TO KEEP FROM LOSING YOU.
SHF
ズ…
WHAT I MEAN TO SAY IS... IF YOU'RE WILLING TO DO THIS...
...YOU WON'T HAVE TO GO TO ADANLEE, THE ISLE OF OBLIVION!

WOULD YOU BECOME MY APPRENTICE AND STAY TOGETHER WITH ME?
WOULD YOU DO ME THIS HONOR...
...OF DONNING MY CAP?
I MEAN, I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER YOU, AND...
I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD TAKE SOME TIME TO THINK THIS OVER...
ZSH
UM...
I, UH...
GWIP

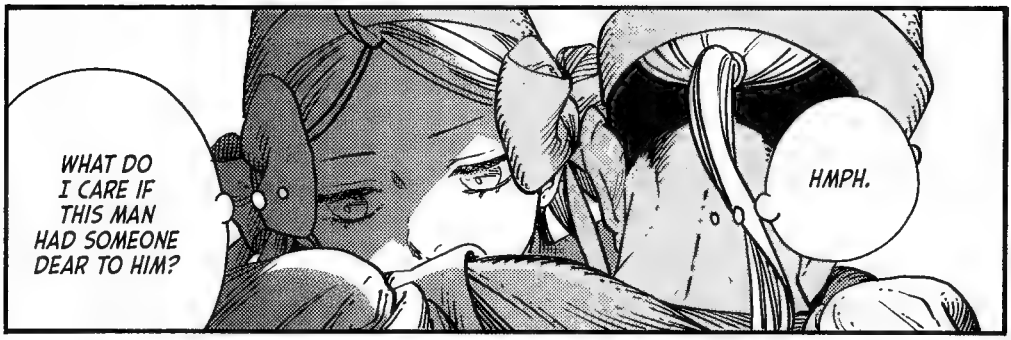
...IF I REALLY *DID* HAVE THE POWER TO USE MAGIC...
...THEN THAT'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO GET BACK.
AT LEAST... I *THINK* I WOULD.
SW
RSH
WELL...
GRIP
AND WHO BETTER TO TEACH ME...
...THAN SOMEBODY WHO TRULY KNEW ME?

WELL... THANKS. I'M IN YOUR HANDS NOW...
...MASTER ATWERT.
HAVE I GOT IT RIGHT, UH...
THERE. HOW'S IT LOOK?
ATWERT...
MY NAME IS ATWERT.
OH...! WOW, UM... MASTER...
I MEAN... TECHNICALLY, I GUESS I AM, BUT...
THIS WAS NEVER HOW I ENVISIONED US.
I'D HOPED WE'D ONE DAY BE BOUND TOGETHER IN A DIFFERENT WAY, BUT...

SOMEDAY... SOMEDAY WE'LL MAKE THIS RIGHT!
NO. I WILL NOT LOSE HOPE.
I WON'T GIVE UP ON YOU, GALGA.
THAT'S A PROMISE I MADE TO MYSELF!
BY THE WAY... WHO IS THAT GIRL?
...

HEY, THERE, LITTLE ONE...
DID YOU GET SEPARATED FROM YOUR MASTER? YOU MUST BE SO FRIGHTENED!
I do not need your help.
I am not lost.
AT-WORRIED!
TIP TOE
Apparently, her name's Ininia.
NOT SURE. I THINK SHE GOT LEFT BEHIND.
SHE WAS ALL BY HERSELF WHEN I CAME ACROSS HER.
...I BET WE'LL STUMBLE ACROSS SOMEONE YOU KNOW!
WHY, AS SOON AS WE GET TO THE EVACUATION SITE...
YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
COME WITH US, AND WE'LL HELP YOU FIND YOUR MASTER.
...
"COME, ININIA."
"TAKE MY HAND."
COME, ININIA.
SHF
TAKE MY HAND.

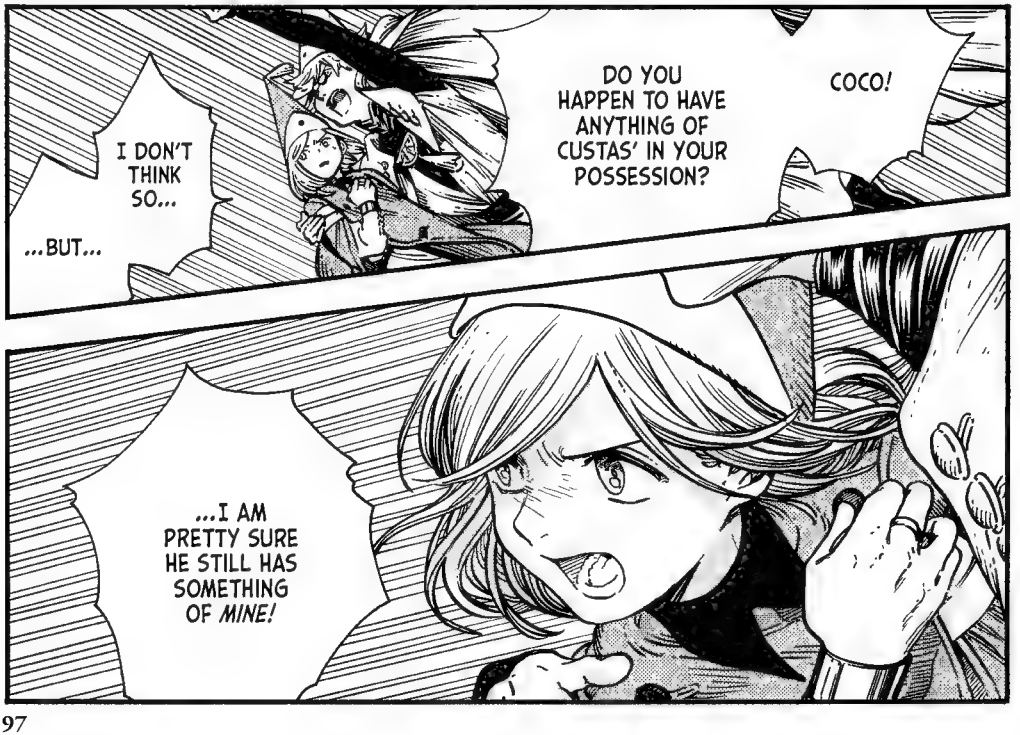
HWUP
PARDON ME, MISS.
WH—?!
...THEIR OFFER MAY BE THE QUICKEST WAY TO GET IN PROXIMITY OF THE PENINSULAR KING.
JUST WHAT I NEEDED. ANOTHER BUSYBODY WHO REFUSES TO LEAVE ME ALONE.
SST
BUT IF IT HELPS ME BLEND IN AMONG THE EVACUEES...
SORRY IF YOU DON'T CARE TOO MUCH FOR BEING PICKED UP.
I'M JUST DOING THIS TO KEEP YOU SAFE, SO I HOPE YOU CAN BEAR WITH IT.
FWUP
?!


WHAT DO I CARE IF THIS MAN HAD SOMEONE DEAR TO HIM?
HMPH.

THERE IS NO REASON FOR ME TO FEEL BAD ABOUT IT.
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME.

VWRSH
ゴオオオオオ
I JUST FOLLOWED THE MOTIONS OF MY GUIDANCE ORB.
ONE THING'S BEEN BUGGING ME... HOW IN THE WORLD DID YOU FIND ME AMONG ALL THIS CHAOS?
OH! THAT'S EASY...

WHRSHHH
IT'S A CONTRAPTION. A SORT OF... MAGICAL TOOL, IF YOU WILL.
PLACE WITHIN IT A PIECE OF THAT WHICH YOU SEEK, AND IT WILL POINT IN THE DIRECTION YOU SHOULD GO.


COCO!
DO YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE ANYTHING OF CUSTAS' IN YOUR POSSESSION?
I DON'T THINK SO...
...BUT...
...I AM PRETTY SURE HE STILL HAS SOMETHING OF *MINE!*

ALL THREE TIMES I'VE SEEN HIM IN THE CITY...
...HE'S BEEN WEARING THE WINGCLOAK WE MADE FOR HIM.
AND SOMEWHERE IN MY BAG...
...I SHOULD STILL HAVE SCRAPS OF THE CLOTH I USED TO MAKE IT!
IF I CAN GET TO MY STUFF...
...I CAN FIND A PIECE OF IT TO PUT IN OUR GUIDANCE ORB!
YOUR BELONGINGS, HM?
THEN OUR FIRST DESTINATION IS THE STATIONER'S TENT.
ZWRMMM
SNAP
UNFORTU-NATELY...

...GETTING INSIDE MAY BE EASIER SAID THAN DONE.
I'D HOPED IT WAS MY IMAGINATION, BUT I'M STARTING TO FEEL QUITE CERTAIN...
...THAT THE CLOSER WE GET TO THE HEART OF THE CITY, THE MORE TENTACLES WE'RE HAVING TO FEND OFF.

Chapter 66 • End

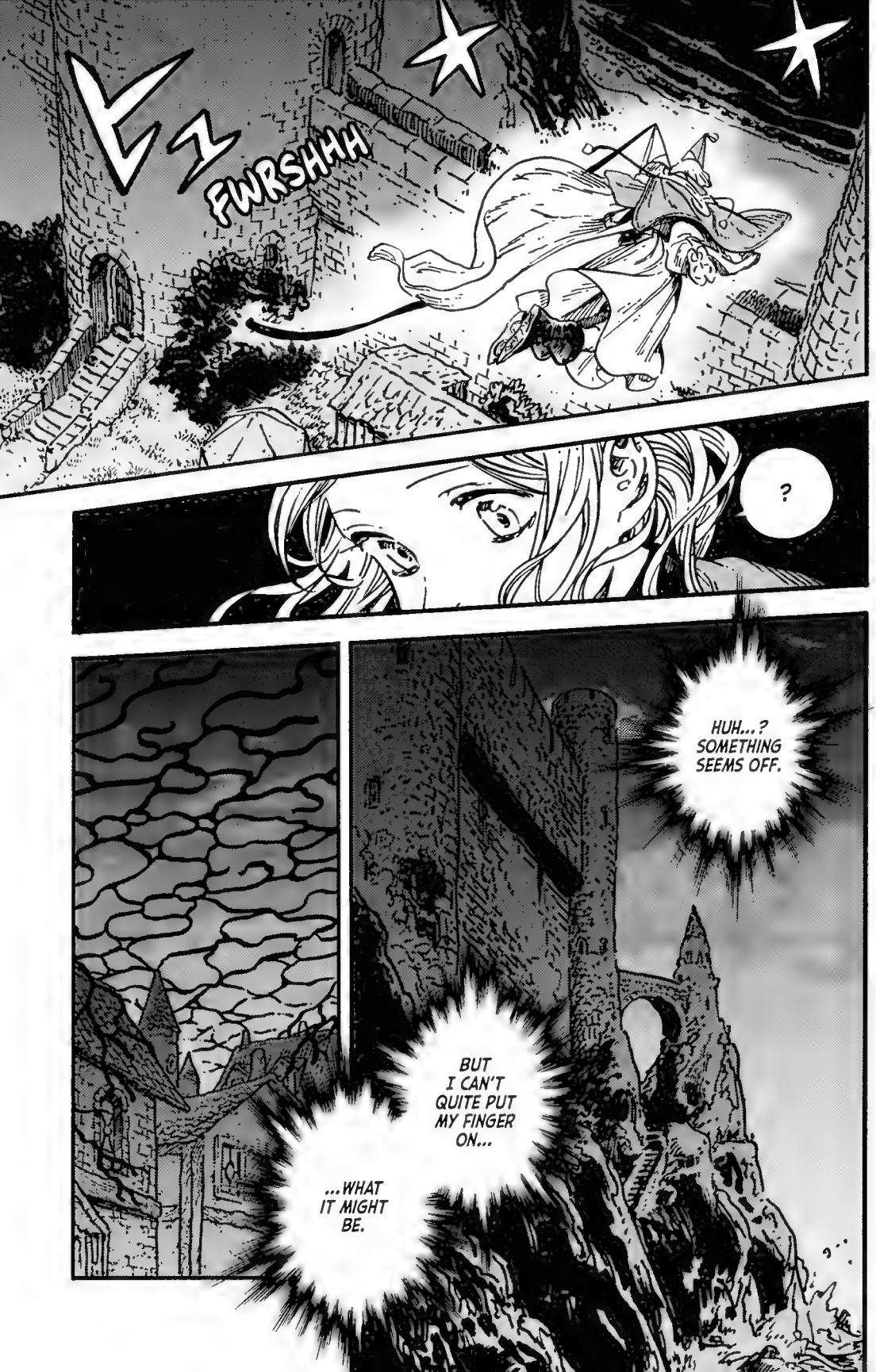
Witch Hat Atelier

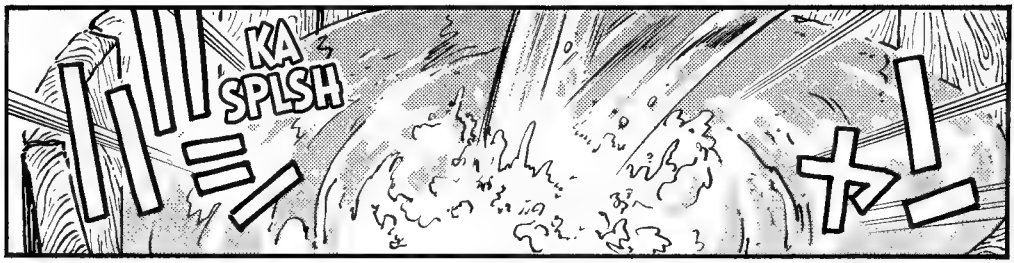
Chapter 67

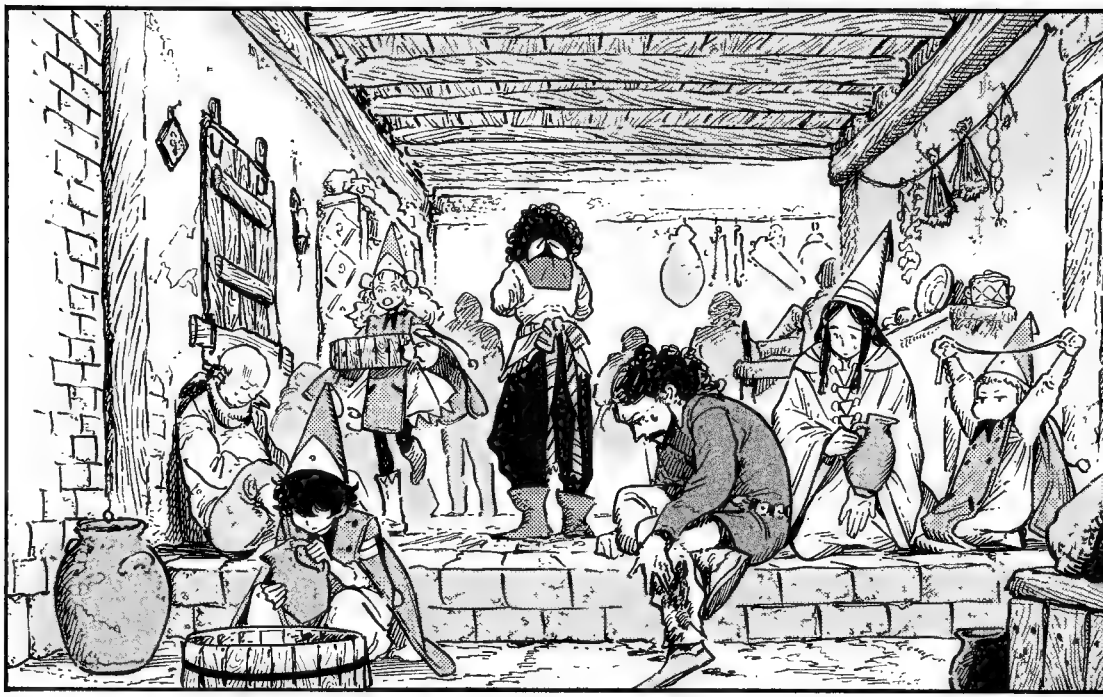
FWOOOM
ゴォォォ
HERE IT IS!
AHA!
RMMJ
MASTER! I FOUND IT! A LENGTH OF LEFTOVER CLOTH...
...FROM THE WING-CLOAK!
WH...? WHY IS IT SO COLD?
IS THAT SNOW?!
FWWWSHHH

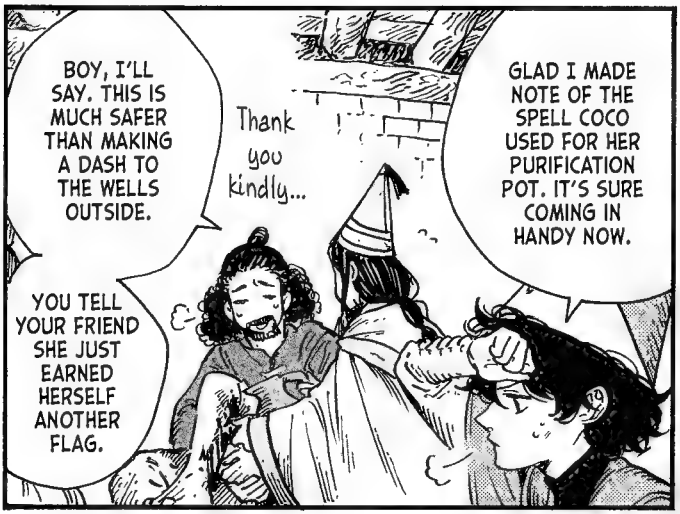
GOOD. IT'S AS EFFECTIVE AS I'D HOPED.
WHATEVER THIS CREATURE IS, SO LONG AS IT'S UNSUITED TO ALPINE CLIMES...
...WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO COUNT ON RAPID DROPS IN TEMPERATURE TO HELP SLOW IT DOWN.
LO
KRKK
LO
KRKK
VSSHHH
VSS
...
VSHH
MASTER QIFREY!
DID YOU HEAR? I FOUND A FRAGMENT OF THE CLOAK FOR US TO USE!
KRNCH
KRNCH
I'VE A FEW OTHER SPELLS THAT WOULD LIKELY CHILL IT EVEN MORE...
...BUT I CANNOT RISK THEM WHEN THERE ARE PEOPLE YET TO FLEE THE CITY.

VSSHHH
IS THAT THE OCEAN I HEAR?
!
VSS
MASTER QIFREY! I HAVE AN IDEA! WATER FROM THE OCEAN IS REALLY SALTY, RIGHT?
!
DASH
OF COURSE! SEAWATER!
AT HOME, WE USED SALT TO REMOVE THE LEAF-FALL LEECHES THAT LIVED IN THE FOREST!
I DON'T KNOW IF IT'LL WORK FOR *THIS* LEECH, BUT IT MIGHT BE WORTH A SHOT!
READY!
FWIP
GRAB HOLD! I'M GOING TO TAKE US TO THE WATER'S EDGE!
YES. LET US GIVE IT A TRY, COCO.
HMM... AS LONG AS IT'S NOT AN OCEAN-DWELLING SPECIES...


FWRSHHH
?
HUH...? SOMETHING SEEMS OFF.
BUT I CAN'T QUITE PUT MY FINGER ON...
...WHAT IT MIGHT BE.


KA
SPLSH




BOY, I'LL SAY. THIS IS MUCH SAFER THAN MAKING A DASH TO THE WELLS OUTSIDE.
Thank you kindly...
GLAD I MADE NOTE OF THE SPELL COCO USED FOR HER PURIFICATION POT. IT'S SURE COMING IN HANDY NOW.
YOU TELL YOUR FRIEND SHE JUST EARNED HERSELF ANOTHER FLAG.

WHEW

SO THAT'S WHY EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE BLEEDING SO BADLY...
EXACTLY.
NOW IT'S NOT PLEASANT, BUT THE TRICK IS TO SQUEEZE ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BITE...
SQWWWRR!
THE THING ABOUT LEECHES...
...IS THAT THEY'VE GOT A TOXIN IN THEIR SALIVA THAT THINS THE BLOOD.
STOPS THE WOUND FROM CLOTTING AND SCABBING OVER, MAKING IT HARD TO HEAL.
OWWWW!
OW, OW, OW, OW !!
...AND BIND EVERYTHING UP NICE AND TIGHT.
THEN YOU'RE GONNA WANNA RINSE IT AWAY WITH CLEAN WATER...
SWIP
SWIPPITY
...AND PUSH ALL THE TOXIN BACK OUT OF THE BODY.
GAHHHHHH!
YEEOWWWCH!
SWIP
ALL RIGHT! NOW YOU KNOW THE STEPS. TIME TO DIVIDE AND CONQUER.
THAT'S THE OTHER THING ABOUT LEECH TOXIN. IT DULLS THE PAIN.
DEAL WITH IT.
WAHHHH!!
WHAT GIVES?! THAT HURT EVEN WORSE THAN THE BITE!
WIPE
WIPE
THROB
THROB

I MEAN... FIRST AID IS A LOT LIKE THE STUFF *DOCTORS* DO...
...SO I'M NOT REALLY SURE IT'S OKAY FOR US TO, UM... YOU KNOW...
...LEARN ABOUT THAT...
THAT'S VERY NICE OF YOU, BUT...
OH! UM!
YOU, TOO, LITTLE WITCH. I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO WRAP THE BANDAGES AND WHICH HERBS TO USE.
...ACTUALLY, THERE'S A RULE ABOUT WITCHES AND MEDICINE...
...

Mm-hm!
YEAH! WHAT SHE SAID!
AND IF YOU ASK ME, EVERYBODY OUGHTA HAVE A FEW FIELD TREATMENTS UNDER THEIR BELT!
WELL, THE TWO OF US AREN'T DOCTORS! IT'S NOT LIKE WE CAN SHOW YOU MUCH BEYOND THE BASICS.
NO REASON FOR *THAT* TO BE OFF-LIMITS!
IT'S JUST A BIT OF KNOWLEDGE FOR HELPING FOLKS.
TAKE IT FROM ME, LITTLE WITCH.
ANY SOUL OUT THERE WHO TRIES TO RESTRICT THE THINGS YOU LEARN...
...IS ONLY DOING IT TO KEEP YOU SQUARE UNDER THEIR THUMB.

SPSHHH
I HEAR YOU! BE RIGHT OVER!
YOU THERE! WITCH! FETCH ME SOME WATER!
GONNA NEED SOME MORE OVER HERE, TOO!
SILVER STARS ABOVE... NOW YOU GOT ME THINKING 'BOUT THE MAN I USED TO BE MARRIED TO.
WHY I EVER DID THAT, I NEVER COULD SAY. JUST TOO YOUNG TO KNOW BETTER, I S'POSE.
...
DO YOU THINK...
C'MON, TETIA. ARE YOU GONNA GIVE ME A HAND OR WHAT?
THMP
DO YOU THINK MAYBE WE SHOULD SHOW THEM HOW TO DO IT?
HOW TO PURIFY IT, SO THEY CAN MAKE THEIR *OWN* CLEAN WATER?

IT'S SUCH AN EASY SEAL TO DRAW, AND...
BUT...
YANK
DO YOU EVEN HEAR THE WORDS COMING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH?!
WH...?!
TEACHING MAGIC TO ANYONE WHO'S NOT A WITCH IS AGAINST THE PRINCIPLES!
WHSPR
WHSPR
...THEY'RE GOING TO ALL THIS TROUBLE TO TEACH *US* HOW TO TREAT THE WOUNDED.

WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER IF PEOPLE AND WITCHES...
...WERE A LITTLE MORE...
TETIA...? WHAT ARE YOU—
NEVER YOU FEAR, THE KNIGHTS ARE HERE!
YOUR SAFETY'S CLEAR, SO RAISE A CHEER!
TA-DAH!

FWAP
LOOK! WE'VE BROUGHT A WINDOWWAY TO WHISK YOU AWAY!
ARE YOU ALL UNHARMED?
IS EVERYONE ALL RIGHT?
HOORAY!
THE KNIGHTS OF THE CROWN AND THE KNIGHTS MORALIS ARE HERE FOR YOU, FAIR CITIZENS!
FIRST, LET'S GET YOU OUT OF THE CITY!
NOW, NOW! SAVE YOUR PRAISE. WE'LL BE ALL TOO HAPPY TO BASK IN IT LATER.
WE'RE IN YOUR DEBT, MAGIC KNIGHTS!
OH, THANK GOODNESS!

DOCTORS THERE ARE PREPARING SPECIAL TREATMENTS FOR ANYONE WHO'S LOST TOO MUCH BLOOD.
THEY'LL SEE TO EVERYONE IN TURN, SO THERE'S NO NEED TO PUSH!
TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE FOR ALL WHO NEED IT. WE'LL FERRY THE MOST GRAVELY INJURED TO THE WESTERN SPIRE.
NOT SO FAST!
FWP
JUST A LITTLE LONGER, TARTAH!
WE'LL HAVE YOU AT THE SPIRE IN NO TIME!
TMP
AA...
TMP
COME ON. WE SHOULD STICK CLOSE BEHIND.
THE THREE OF YOU DON'T APPEAR TO BE INJURED.
WE'LL HAVE TO ASK YOU TO TAKE THE WINDOWWAY TO THE EVACUATION SITE INSTEAD.

WE WOULDN'T BE STANDING AROUND! THERE MUST BE SOMETHING AT THE SPIRE WE CAN DO TO *HELP!*
B...
BUT...!
THE LAST THING THEY NEED IS A CROWD OF CONCERNED FRIENDS STANDING AROUND.
BELIEVE US, THE SPIRE IS ALREADY PACKED TO THE GILLS.
AND JUST *HOW*, PRAY TELL...
...MIGHT A *WITCH* EXPECT TO ASSIST A *DOCTOR?*

PLEASE, BREAK IT DOWN FOR US. WHAT *PRECISELY* DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?
UM...!
FWIP
SHE MEANT INDIRECTLY!
WE'VE BEEN USING SPELLS TO MAKE SURE THERE'S PLENTY OF CLEAN WATER! SHE OBVIOUSLY MEANT SOMETHING LIKE THAT!
RIGHT, RICHEH?!
YUP. NOT TREATING ANYBODY. JUST LENDING A HAND.
LIKE MAKING BANDAGES!

EVEN IF THE DOCTORS DID NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES, THEY'D SOONER ASK A GROWN-UP WITCH THAN AN APPRENTICE.
CUTE. BUT THE HEALING SPIRE ALREADY HAS PLENTY OF CONTRAPTIONS ON HAND.
PSSST! TETIA! STOP TALKING!
BUT...!
SORRY. WE'RE JUST SO SCARED, I GUESS WE WEREN'T THINKING STRAIGHT.
O-OH! OF COURSE! HOW SILLY OF US!
Y-YES, SIR...
YEAH. ANY FURTHER PROTESTS COULD REQUIRE A *RESPONSE*, IF YOU CATCH MY DRIFT.
LISTEN TO YOUR FRIEND, LITTLE ONE. BETTER TO DROP THE ISSUE NOW.

GUH!
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, SAYING THAT IN FRONT OF THE *KNIGHTS MORALIS*?!
COULD YOU BE ANY MORE CARELESS?
HOW ABOUT USING A LITTLE COMMON SENSE?!
LOOK... IT'S NOT LIKE I'VE NEVER HAD SIMILAR THOUGHTS.
THAT WAS ENOUGH ANXIETY FOR A RICHEH-*LIFETIME.*
URK... I'M SORRY, OKAY?
SHVR
VR
BUT IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE *SMART* ABOUT IT, LIKE THE WAY WE HELPED EUINI!
WE'LL HAVE TO KEEP OUR EYES PEELED AND DO WHATEVER *WE* CAN.

BECAUSE IF THE KNIGHTS CATCH ON, WE'LL BE PUTTING COCO IN DANGER.
R... RIGHT!
I DIDN'T THINK OF THAT...
FWSHHH
COCO, MASTER QIFREY, MASTER OLLY... THEY'RE ALL STILL IN THE CITY.
PLEASE...
PLEASE LET THEM BE SAFE!

SPRSH
FR

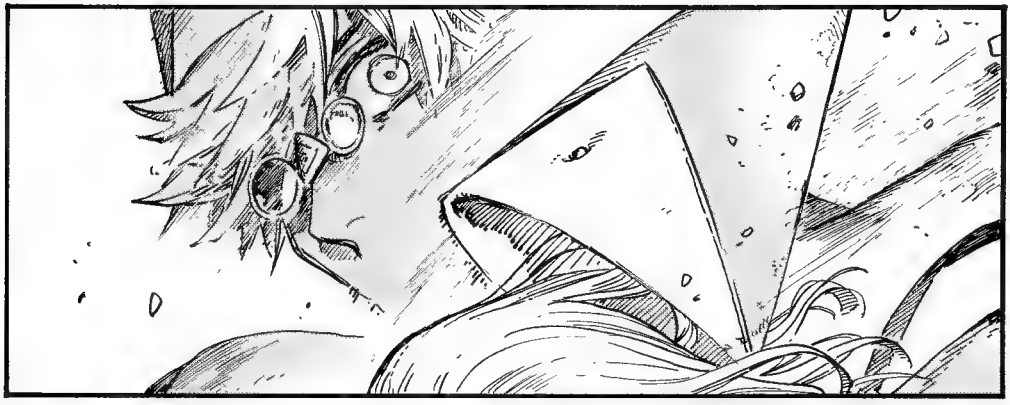
LOOKS LIKE SOME WYRMHERDERS SET UP CAMP ON THE BEACH.
IS THAT WHAT ALLOWED THE LEECH TO GROW SO LARGE? A FEAST OF DRAGON'S BLOOD?

IT WORKED!
THE OCEAN WATER...
THE SALT IS DRIVING IT BACK!
SLTHR

HM?
UM... MASTER?
THERE'S SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN BOTHERING ME EVER SINCE WE FLEW OVER.
OH, THANK GOODNESS... THEY'RE STILL BREATHING.
WHEW...
LEECHES DON'T LIKE SALT. SO IT MAKES SENSE THAT IT WOULD STEER AWAY FROM THE OCEAN AND INTO TOWN.
BUT IF IT PASSED CLOSE ENOUGH TO ATTACK THESE DRAGONS ON THE SHORE...
...WHY WOULDN'T IT TRY TO GET INSIDE THERE, TOO? IT COMPLETELY IGNORED THE CASTLE!

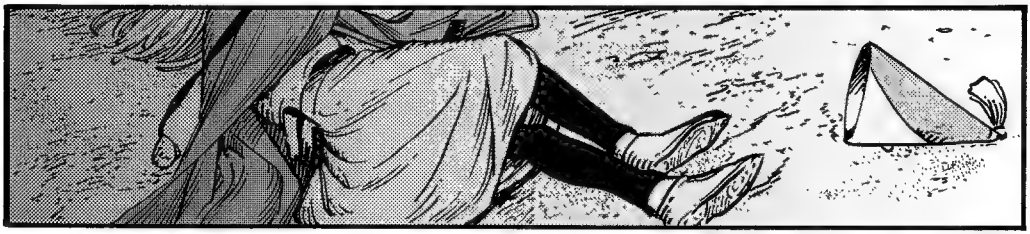
COCO'S RIGHT. THE LEECH HAS SWARMED THE REST OF THE CITY.
WHY **WOULDN'T** IT SNAKE ITS WAY INTO THE CASTLE?
THERE'S A GAPING HOLE IN ONE OF THE TOWERS!
?!
GLINT
IF THERE'S ANYTHING THAT SETS CASTLE EZREST APART, IT'S THE SPELL WARD. THAT'S THE ONLY THING THAT COULD'VE KEPT IT OUT...
...WHICH MEANS THIS CREATURE...
...THIS TERRIBLE THREAT...
...MUST HAVE BEEN WROUGHT BY MAGIC, AT THE HANDS OF A **WITCH.**

KRACKLE
IT'S AN ABOMINATION.
A MONSTER, CREATED TO—
MASTER! WATCH OUT!!
KR
WHAK



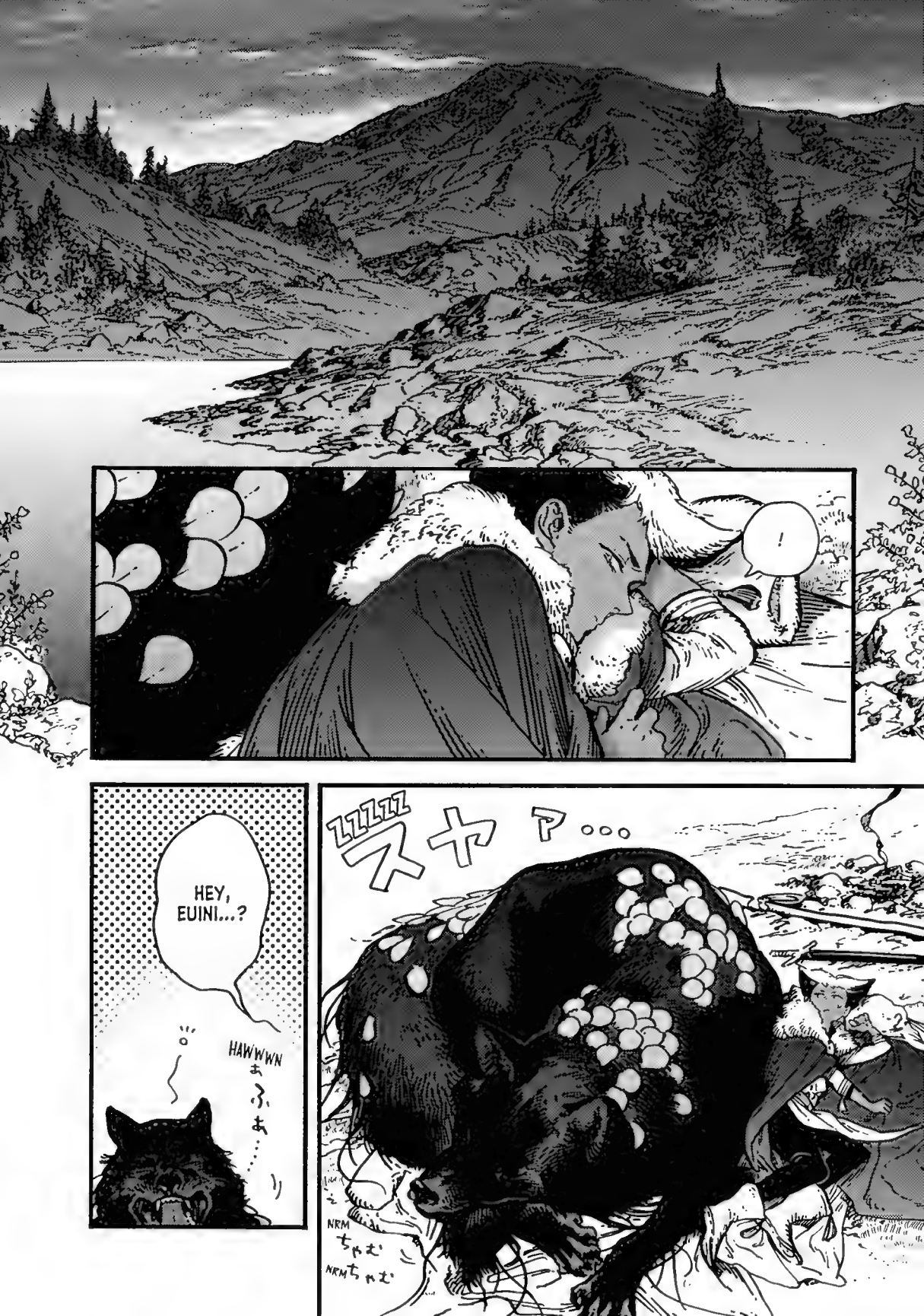
WHAT A SHAME YOUR REMAINING ONE HAD TO CATCH SIGHT OF SOMETHING IT SHOULDN'T.

I KNOW YOU. YOU'RE BELDARUIT'S WHELP. THE ONE WITH THE MISSING EYE.



Witch Hat Atelier

Special
Extra


!
HEY, EUINI...?
HAWWWN
ふぁ…
ZZZZZ
スヤァ…
NRM ちゃむ
NRMちゃむ

Y'KNOW. ABOUT *NOT* SPENDING THE NIGHT AS A SCALEWOLF?
REMEMBER WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT?
S-SORRY...
SHOOM
しょぼり…
IT'S JUST... I SEEM TO BE REALLY *INTIMIDATING* WHEN I'M LIKE THIS.
YOU DO REMEMBER YOU'RE AN APPRENTICE WITCH, RIGHT? *NOT* A WOLF?
N-NO OTHER ANIMALS OR PEOPLE DARE COME NEAR US.
IT'S KIND OF R-REASSURING IN A WAY... BEING IN THIS FORM...
...AND SO I END UP...

WE'VE GOT PRESSING NEEDS AND SO MANY WAYS TO MEET 'EM. THE PERFECT STORM TO SET OUR SKILLS SAILING AHEAD!
YOU GOTTA STOP *PAWING* AND START *DRAWING!*

Flits around intruders while sounding an alarm.
C'MON! YOU COULD BE WORKING UP A FANCY NEW BEASTWARDING SEAL WITH EXTENDED RANGE!
Emits an odor that drives wild animals away.
OR FASHIONING US A WINGCHIME DRAGONFLY TO PATROL THE AREA AND LET US KNOW IF ANYONE'S NEARBY!

I MEAN... I GET IT. SOMETIMES IT'S TOUGH TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE...
...BETWEEN USING YOUR TALENTS TO MAKE THE JOURNEY *EASIER* AND TAKING THE *EASY WAY OUT.*
BUT THE TWO COULDN'T BE FURTHER APART!

I KNOW I SHOULD, BUT...
THAT'S WHY YOU GOTTA DEVELOP A GOOD EYE. YOUR WHOLE FUTURE IS RIDING ON IT.
YOU GET WHAT I'M SAYING?!
MY FUTURE, HUH...
STREEEEETCH
...IMAGINING A FUTURE FOR MYSELF?
...I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO START.
...
FWSHHH
...I'VE GOT NOTHING.

LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY. YOU DON'T NEED TO FOCUS ON SOME DISTANT GOAL.
AND YOU DON'T NEED A PICTURE IN YOUR HEAD OF WHO YOU'LL BE WHEN YOU GROW UP.
IT'S NOT LIKE IT'D BE SET IN STONE, ANYWAY. YOU NEVER KNOW HOW THINGS'LL TURN OUT.
I had no idea what I wanted to be.
WHEN I ASK YOU TO THINK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE, I MEAN MORE LIKE...
...SEEING YOURSELF JUST A FEW STEPS AHEAD OF WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW, Y'KNOW?
LET'S SAY, UH...
FWING
PLAK
PLAK
FIVE DAYS FROM NOW.

SHOOT. IF YOU WANT, LET'S SAY THIRTY.
PLAK
PLAK
PLAK
TOO SHORT? THEN HOW ABOUT TEN?
PLAK
J...
JUST *FIVE* DAYS?!
SNAK
PLA
PLK
PLK
PLK
FWING
HOW'S THE EUINI OF THIRTY DAYS FROM NOW GONNA BE DIFFERENT FROM THE EUINI OF TODAY?
WHAT'S HE LIKE? WHAT IS HE ABLE TO *DO*? C'MON, THINK!

SPKL
SPKL
OR THE ONE WHO STILL ONLY KNOWS HOW TO RUN OFF THREATS WITH A CANINE GROWL?
DO YOU PREFER THE EUINI WHO DOES A BANG-UP JOB DRAWING BEAST-WARDING SEALS?
...MAYBE IT'LL HAVE YOU REEVALUATING WHICH PATH YOU'D RATHER TAKE.
AND GIVEN THAT THE DIFFERENCE HINGES ON THE CHOICES YOU MAKE RIGHT NOW...

THANK YOU, MASTER ALAIRA...
...
I NEEDED THAT.

HEY, I'M NOT SAYING THAT'S ALWAYS THE WRONG CHOICE.
I'M ALWAYS FINDING A SAFE SPOT TO RUN OFF TO AND HIDE.
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A BAD HABIT OF MINE...

I JUST WANNA HELP YA SEE THAT RUNNING OFF TO SAFETY ISN'T THE ONLY OPTION.
KNOW THAT *YOU* HAVE THE POWER TO CREATE SAFETY AND EXTEND IT ALL ON YOUR OWN.

SO JUT OUT THAT CHEST! STAND TALL!
YOU'VE GOT THE SKILLS!
DON'T BE AFRAID TO USE 'EM!
...!
...YEAH!

...YOU'VE SHOT UP ANOTHER COUPLE MARKS AGAIN.
...JUUUST MAYBE...
IS IT JUST ME, OR...?
SPEAKING OF WHICH...
WHAT?!
H-HUH?
FSH
FSH
FSH
I GET THE FEELING THAT...
QVR
QVR
...STARING UP AT ME?
PRETTY SOON, IT'S NOT ONLY GONNA BE YOUR WOLF FORM I'M TILTING MY HEAD UP TO SEE. I'LL BE STARING UP AT YOU ALL THE TIME!
Ahh, youth... What a whirlwind!
HAHA! GOTTA LOVE THEM GROWTH SPURTS!
ぼや
FWUMMMMM
...NI...?
UH... EUINI? YOU OKAY THERE?

IT'S TOO MUCH! I CAN'T TAKE IT!!!
J-JUST IMAGINE! RICHEH STARING UP INTO MY EYES...!
WOW, EUINI?
...when we tapped our foreheads together and... Auughhh!
GAHHH-HHHH...!
So, so fluffy...
Ooh, how fluffy...
PET PET
U-Um... Uh... R-Richeh...?!
GRMMMM-MMM...!
Just the words get me thinking about the time...
VWRP
COME IN, EUINI!
FLUSTER
FLUSTER
H-HEY! ESTUS TO EUINI!

O-OKAY! I'M G-GONNA GIVE IT MY ALL!
AND BY THE TIME I'M DONE, I'M GONNA BE STANDING SO TALL...
...IT MAKES ME AS A WOLF LOOK TINY BY COMPARISON!
All right! Time to sit down and study!
WOOHOO! YOU GO, EUINI!
YOU'VE GOT THIS IN THE BAG!
Ignite the height!
ZRRRK

DON'T DOUBT IT, KID. BY THE TIME YOU'RE DONE...
...YOU'LL BE STANDING TALLER...
...THAN YOU CAN EVEN IMAGINE.
EVERY PAGE DRAWN IS ANOTHER STEP FORWARD.
TWO PAGES, AND YOU'RE ALREADY AT A TROT.
PRETTY SOON, YOU LOOK AROUND AND REALIZE...
...YOU'VE PASSED ME BY...
...ALONG WITH ALL THE OTHER GROWN-UPS...
...AND EVERYONE ELSE YOU'VE EVER KNOWN.
SO RUN! RUN TOWARD A FUTURE OF YOUR OWN MAKING.
LISTEN TO ME, GOING ON LIKE I KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT...
HEH.
...OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
VWSH
VWSH
VWSH
VWSH

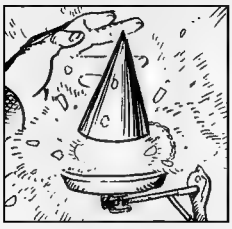
YOU WERE RIGHT.
...
GOTTA HAND IT TO YA, QIFREY...
IT AIN'T TOO BAD.
IN FACT, I THINK I'M STARTING TO ENJOY IT.
GUIDING AN APPRENTICE OF MY VERY OWN.

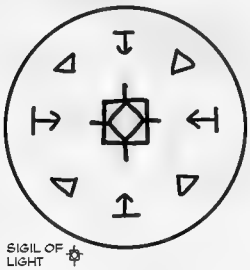
THE CONTRAPTIONS AND SEALS OF WITCH HAT

A BRIEF RECAP OF SOME OF THE CONTRAPTIONS OBSERVED IN THIS WORLD, ALONG WITH THE SEALS ON WHICH THEY RELY.

WALL-ANCHORED FLOATGLOW LAMP

OPERATED BY LINING THE BOTTOM TRAY WITH A PRE-DRAWN PAGE FROM A PALM QUIRE, CAUSING THE CONICAL TOP TO FLOAT AND REFLECT THE SEAL'S GENERATED LIGHT OUTWARD.

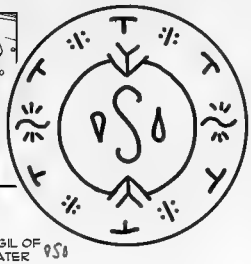




SIGN OF CONVERGENCE SIGN OF LEVITATION SIGIL OF LIGHT

VAPOR BUBBLE

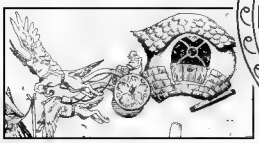
CONSISTS OF TWO SHALLOW SAUCERS WHOSE INSIDE FACES ARE INSCRIBED WITH SEALS. THEIR SPELL GATHERS MOISTURE FROM THE SURROUNDING AIR AND STORES IT AS A LARGE, ROUND GLOBULE OF FRESH WATER.

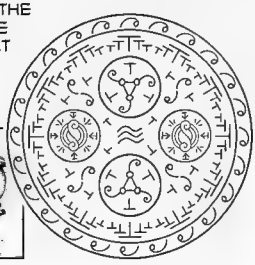


SIGN OF COLUMNS SIGN OF COOLING SIGN OF GATHERING SIGIL OF WIND SIGIL OF WATER

PEGASUS CARRIAGE

DRAWN BY A TEAM OF PEGASI AND THUS ABLE TO SOAR THE SKY. KEPT STEADY BY THE SEAL AFFIXED TO ITS REAR, WHICH HAS THE APPEARANCE OF A LARGE THIRD WHEEL MOUNTED AT AN UNUSUAL ANGLE.

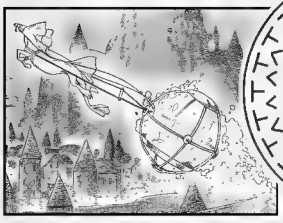


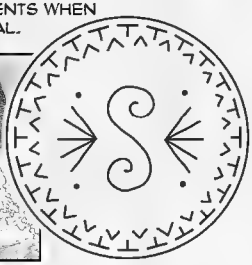


SIGN OF COLUMNS SIGN OF WIND SIGN OF LEVITATION SIGN OF AERIFORMS DEFINED SIGIL OF WHORLING WIND SIGIL OF WIND UNDERFOOT SIGNS OF STABILITY AND LEVEL PLANES AND

BUBBLE CARRIAGE

UNLIKE THE PEGASUS CARRIAGE, ITS SEAL IS INSCRIBED UP HIGH, ON THE INNER ROOF OF THE COACH. IT PROVIDES A STEADY SUPPLY OF AIR, ALLOWING RIDERS TO SAFELY TRAVERSE UNDERWATER ENVIRONMENTS WHEN HITCHED TO A FLIPPERFOAL.

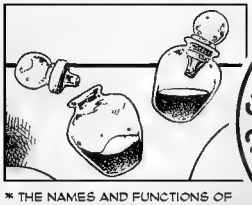


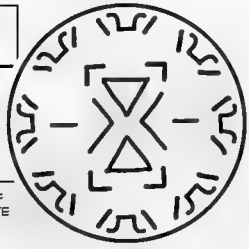


SIGIL OF AERIFORMS SIGN OF COLUMNS SIGN OF REGIONS

TWINNED BOTTLES

A SETUP WHEREIN TWO INSCRIBED MEDALLIONS ARE PLACED IN BOTTLES, ALLOWING A SINGLE RESERVE OF INK OR TINCTURE TO BE SHARED ACROSS BOTH VESSELS. THE SPELL ACTIVATES AS LIQUID RUNS ALONG THE SHALLOW ETCHINGS OF THE SEALS.

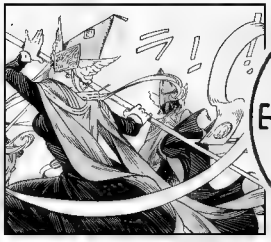


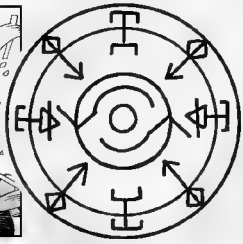


* THE NAMES AND FUNCTIONS OF THESE SIGNS AND/OR SIGILS HAVE LONG SINCE BEEN LOST TO TIME.

CAPTURE PENNANT

USED BY THE KNIGHTS MORALIS TO APPREHEND CRIMINALS AND PERFORM OTHER IMPORTANT DUTIES. THE SEAL FOR THIS CONTRAPTION IS FOUND ON THE CLASP THAT AFFIXES THE PENNANT ITSELF TO THE HAFT THAT SUPPORTS IT.





SIGIL OF REPETITION SIGN OF SIGHTS SET SIGN OF ENTWINING SIGN OF STRENGTHENING

VOLUME 13: COMING SOON!!

NO. 6 Manga Omnibus

Story by Atsuko Asano
Art by Hinoki Kino

The classic dystopian manga returns!

Shion has a perfect life in the city of No. 6, but everything changes when he offers an injured boy shelter. Known only as Rat, he leads Shion to discover the secrets behind No. 6.

RATED: 13+

KODANSHA

READ THE MANGA
KODANSHA.US

Noragami: Stray God Omnibus

Created by
Adachitoka

Revisit the Far Shore in this 3-in-1!

Yato is a homeless god without a shrine who serves those in need. Hiyori is stuck between two worlds after an accident. Will they both be able to help each other...?

RATED: 16+

KODANSHA

READ THE MANGA

KODANSHA.US

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Shonen Note: Boy Soprano

Created by
Yuhki Kamatani

A moving and musical series from the creator of *Our Dreams at Dusk: Shimanami Tasogare*!

Yutaka is a boy treasured by his choir for his beautiful, soprano voice. But what will he do when the inevitable arrives, and his voice starts to deepen?

RATED: 13+

KODANSHA

READ THE MANGA

KODANSHA.US

Shonen Note: Boy Soprano © Yuhki Kamatani/Kodansha Ltd.

Wandance

Created by
Coffee

Get up and join the Wandance!

A boy named Kaboku sees a girl named Wanda dance, and suddenly burns with a need to join in. A new, inspirational manga for fans of *Blue Period* and *Your Lie in April*.

RATED: 13+

KODANSHA

READ THE MANGA
KODANSHA.US

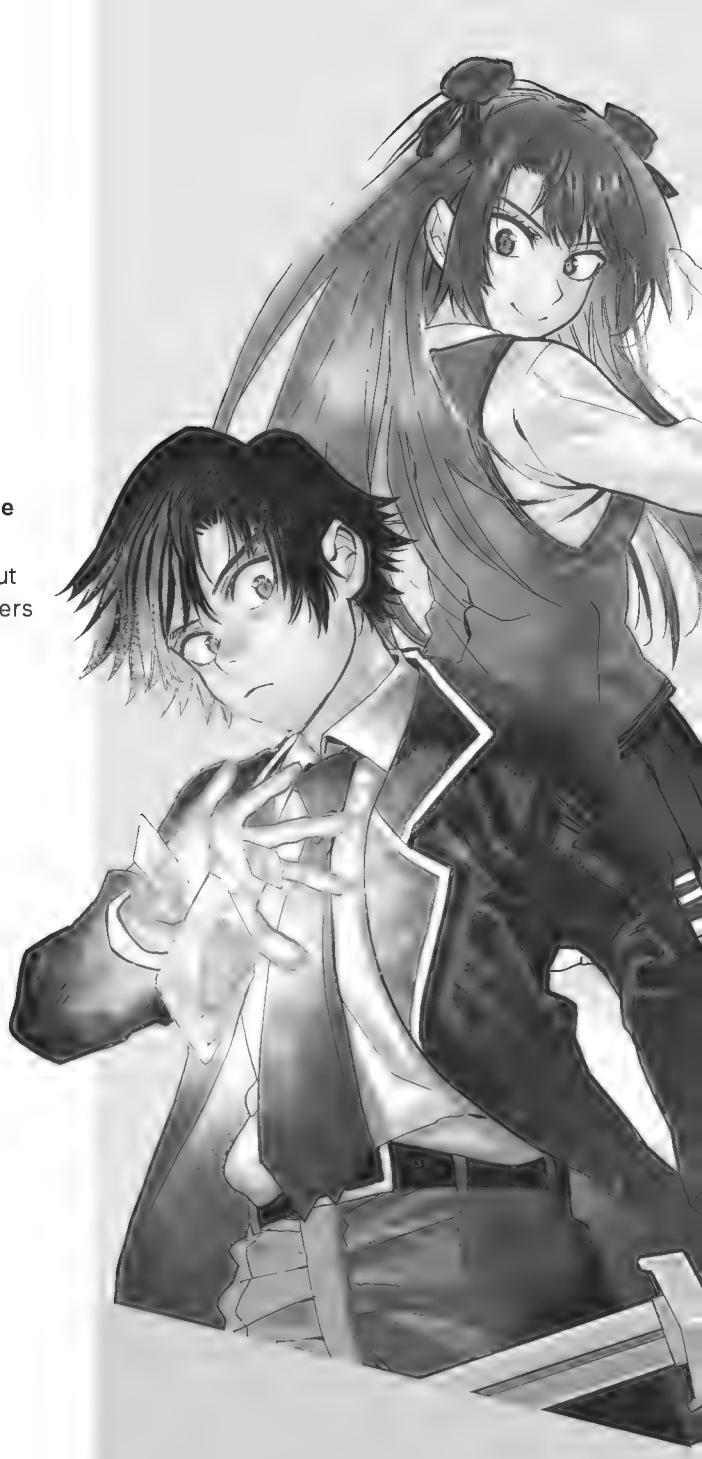
The Iceblade Sorcerer Shall Rule the World

Art by Norihito Sasaki
Story by Nana Mikoshiba
Character design by Riko Korie

Bright-eyed country boy...or Iceblade Sorcerer of legend?

A riveting action fantasy series about Ray White, an ordinary guy who enters the elite Arnold Academy of Magic. Explore the adventures as Ray's connection to the famed Iceblade Sorcerer is revealed!

RATED: 16+



KODANSHA

READ THE MANGA
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Shaman King: Flowers

Created by
Hiroyuki Takei

The bloom of a new era!

The journey continues for the next generation of shamans in this exciting sequel to the best-selling *Shaman King* series!

RATED: 13+

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KODANSHA.US

As a Reincarnated Aristocrat, I'll Use My Appraisal Skill to Rise in the World

Story by Miraijin A
Illustrated by
Natsumi Inoue and jimmy

Brains over brawn!

A salaryman is reborn in another world as the weak child of House Louvent. Using his "appraisal" skill, which lets him see people's stats, Ars recruits talented vassals to help turn his country's fortunes around.

RATED: 13+

KODANSHA

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KODANSHA.US

Go! Go! Loser Ranger!

Created by
Negi Haruba

A new "anti-ranger" action-comedy!

The monsters invading earth were subjugated under the cruel thumbs of the Ranger Force years ago, but one monster has had enough. He'll rebel against the Rangers' might and destroy them all...from the inside!

RATED: 13+

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Penguin & House

Created by
Akiho Ieda

Pen is a penguin who likes pancakes.
Pen the penguin lives with his friend Hayakawa, a human. The only way for Pen to express his love is by doing chores and getting deals at the supermarket. This is their life together.

RATED: 8+

KODANSHA

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In the Clear Moonlit Dusk

Created by
Mika Yamamori

Push past appearances in this teen romance!

Yoi Takiguchi is resigned to being the hero—not heroine—in her life, until Ichimura-sempai shows her what it feels like to be seen for her true beauty...

RATED: 13+

KODANSHA

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Witch Hat Atelier 12

Kodansha Digital Edition

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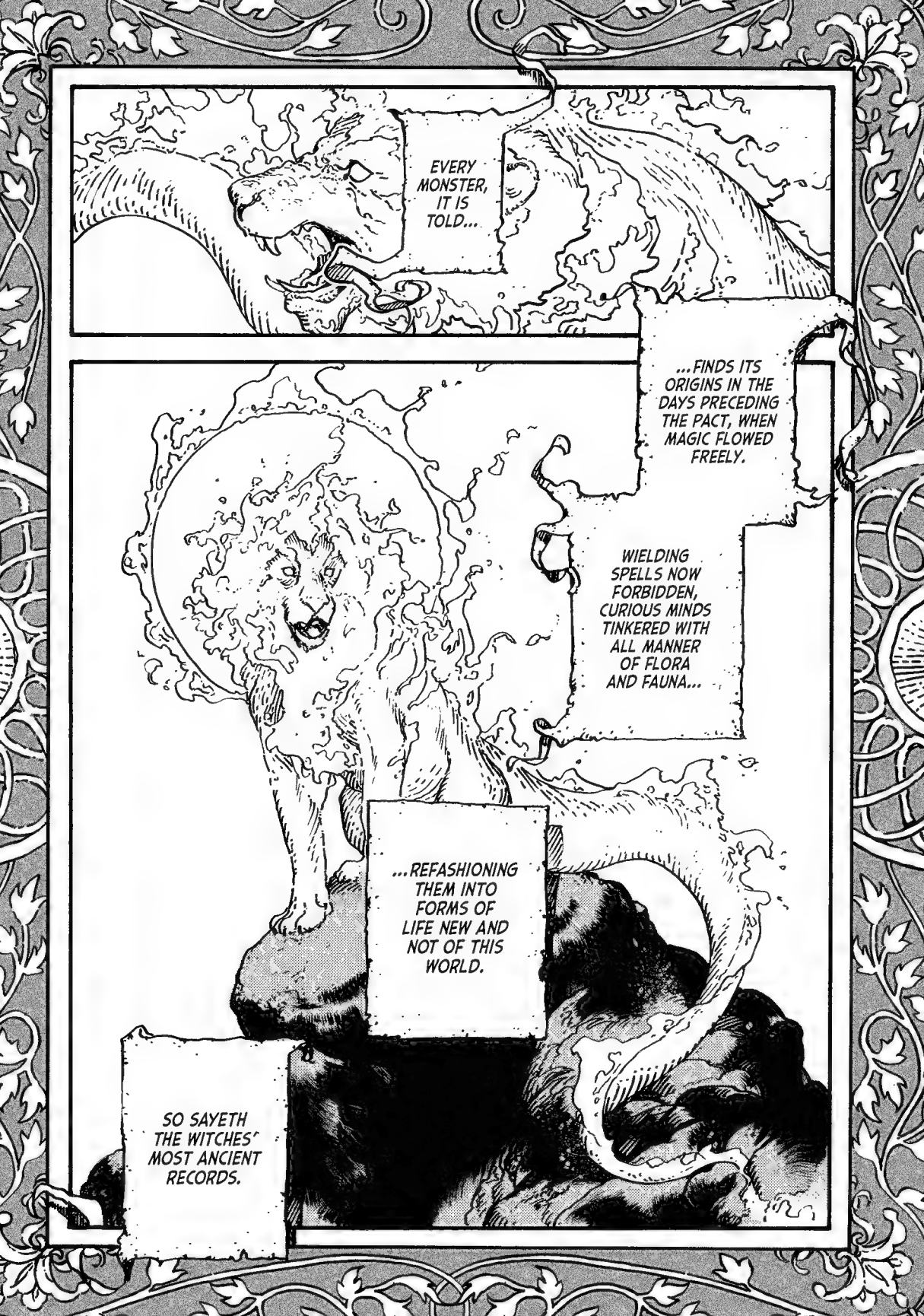
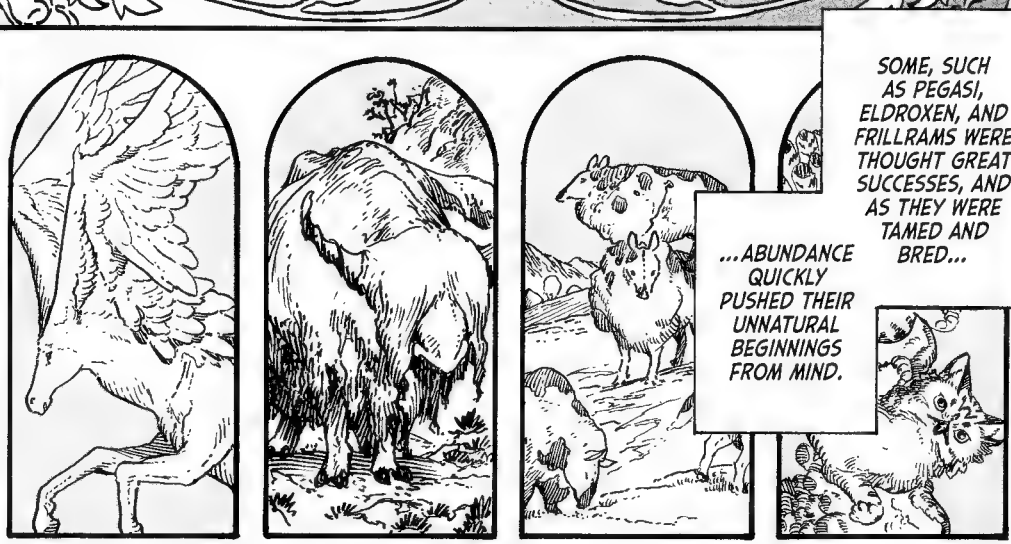
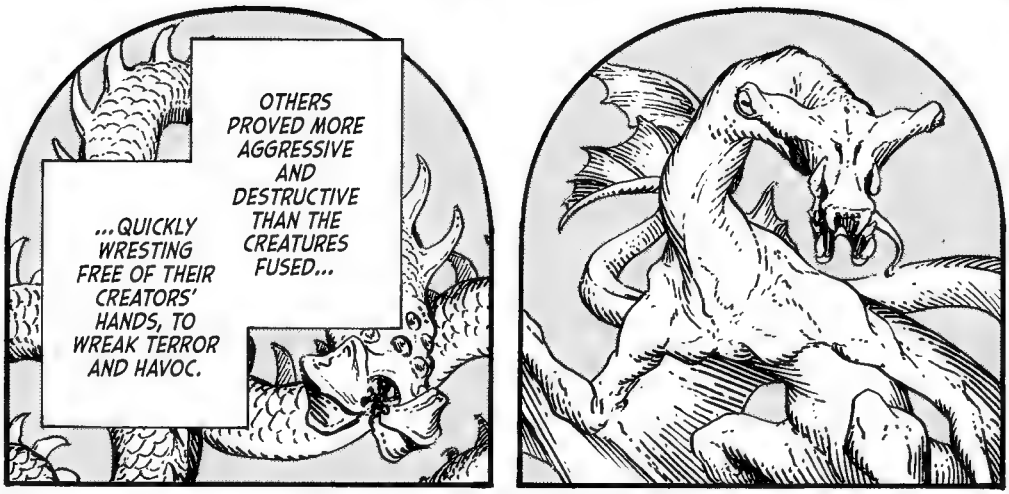
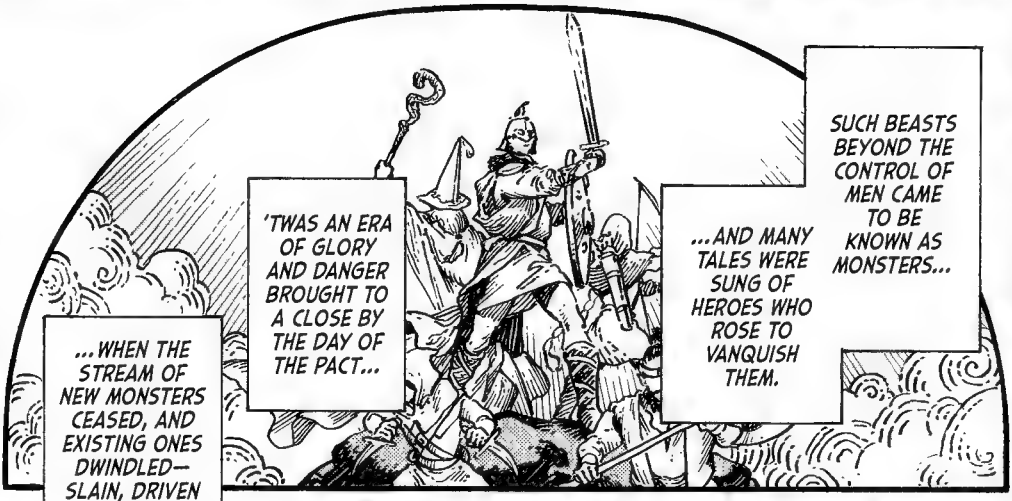
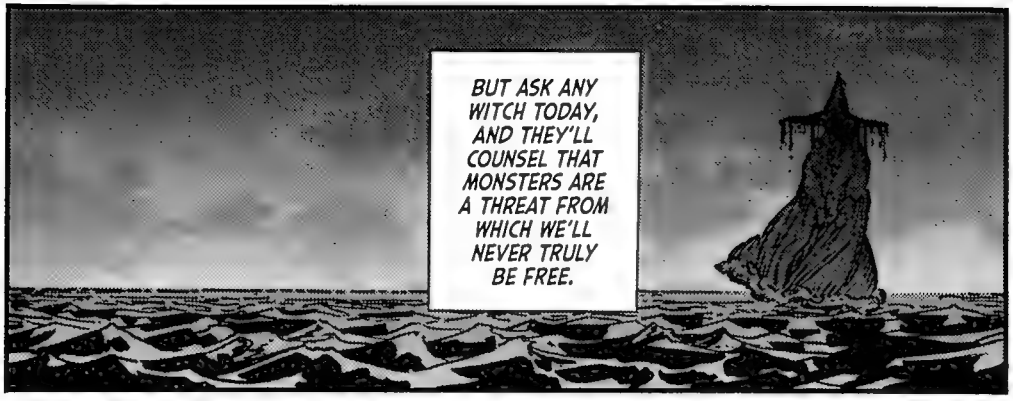

EVERY MONSTER, IT IS TOLD...
...FINDS ITS ORIGINS IN THE DAYS PRECEDING THE PACT, WHEN MAGIC FLOWED FREELY.
WIELDING SPELLS NOW FORBIDDEN, CURIOUS MINDS TINKERED WITH ALL MANNER OF FLORA AND FAUNA...
...REFASHIONING THEM INTO FORMS OF LIFE NEW AND NOT OF THIS WORLD.
SO SAYETH THE WITCHES' MOST ANCIENT RECORDS.

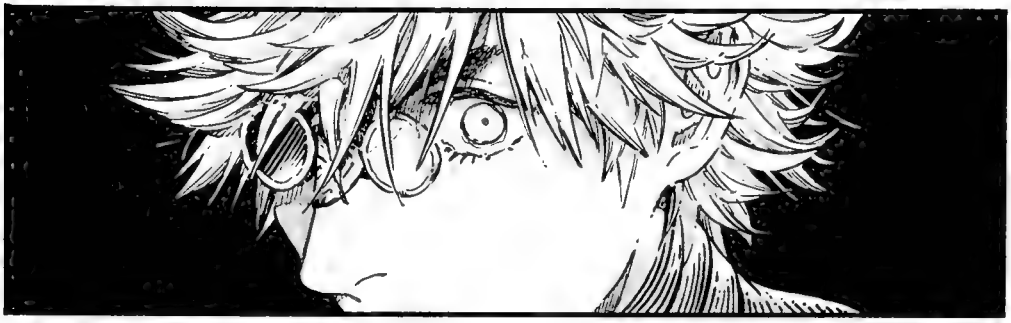

SOME, SUCH AS PEGASI, ELDROXEN, AND FRILLRAMS WERE THOUGHT GREAT SUCCESSES, AND AS THEY WERE TAMED AND BRED...
...ABUNDANCE QUICKLY PUSHED THEIR UNNATURAL BEGINNINGS FROM MIND.


OTHERS PROVED MORE AGGRESSIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE THAN THE CREATURES FUSED...
...QUICKLY WRESTING FREE OF THEIR CREATORS' HANDS, TO WREAK TERROR AND HAVOC.


SUCH BEASTS BEYOND THE CONTROL OF MEN CAME TO BE KNOWN AS MONSTERS...
...AND MANY TALES WERE SUNG OF HEROES WHO ROSE TO VANQUISH THEM.
'TWAS AN ERA OF GLORY AND DANGER BROUGHT TO A CLOSE BY THE DAY OF THE PACT...
...WHEN THE STREAM OF NEW MONSTERS CEASED, AND EXISTING ONES DWINDLED—SLAIN, DRIVEN OFF, AND RELEGATED TO LEGEND.


BUT ASK ANY WITCH TODAY, AND THEY'LL COUNSEL THAT MONSTERS ARE A THREAT FROM WHICH WE'LL NEVER TRULY BE FREE.

FOR THOUGH THE CREATURES THEMSELVES ARE ALL BUT A DISTANT MEMORY...
...THE HANDS ABLE TO FASHION THEM ARE YET ALIVE AND WELL.



Chapter 68

B-DMP
B-DMP
B-DMP
?!

SHV
VR
B-
DMP

...
NGH...
GASP
TWITCH
ZWRRRSH
FWOO

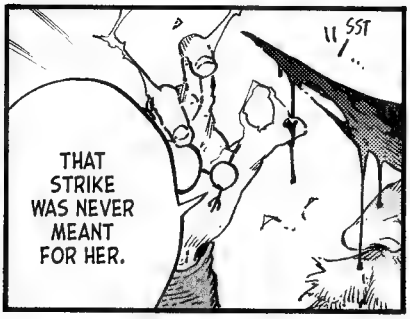
SFFF
CAN YOU HEAR MY VOICE?
COCO!
COCO.
NHNN...
ARE YOU STILL WITH ME?
M... MASTER...?

UNTIL THEN, I NEED YOU TO WAIT.
YOU *MUST NOT* LEAVE THIS PLACE.
HUH...?
WH...?
NGH...!
LIE STILL. YOU MUSTN'T TRY TO GET UP.
DO NOT WORRY. I'LL SEE YOU TO A DOCTOR SOON ENOUGH.
KRRL
TRMBL
TRMBL
Y...YOU MEAN THIS DOME OF... SAND...?
B...BUT I WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE WHAT'S...
FSHHHHH
IT'S TO PROTECT YOU.
DO NOT FRET, MY CHILD.
YES.
I KNOW.

AND THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST DO NOW...
...THAT I WOULD RATHER...
...MY APPRENTICE *NOT* HAVE TO SEE.
FRSPRSH
ｷﾘｯ

KRACKLE

A PITY. I THOUGHT IF I COULD DISABLE THE MASTER...
...THE CHILD COULD BE CONVINCED TO SEE WHATEVER NEEDED TO BE SEEN.


SST
THAT STRIKE WAS NEVER MEANT FOR HER.

BSH
BSH
BSH
BSH
BSH
BSH
BSH

"NO SPELL SHALL BE CAST FOR THE PURPOSE OF HARMING ANOTHER"...
URURSHHH
...."SPREAD THEIR RUIN IN A MANNER MORE INSIDIOUS THAN THEIR CASTER INTENDS."
BZT
BZZT
...."FOR ALL SUCH SPELLS, FROM THE MOMENT THEY ARE INVOKED"...
ZZT
IT WAS SHE WHO PUT HERSELF IN THE PATH OF THE SPELL, SO IT IS SHE WHO MUST SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCE.
BUT SO BE IT.
I AM NOT THE ONE AT FAULT.
TO THINK A PASSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPLES WOULD PROVE TRUE IN SUCH A CURIOUS FASHION...

AND NOW THAT YOU ARE HERE...
FLK
FLK
FLK
FLK
...AND HAVE SEEN MY FACE, I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO GO FREE.
ZWRSH

FRSPRSH

I WILL NOT ENJOY THIS.
HRN
GH

SHRPSH
ストッ
FORTUNATELY FOR ME...
BWRSH
...A CERTAIN *LEECH* WILL EXPLAIN THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ANYONE ELSE I REMOVE FROM THIS WORLD.
ANYONE *ELSE*, YOU SAY?
WHO IS IT YOU'VE ALREADY KILLED, LORD ENGENDALE?
AND TELL ME, O WISE—
NO... O *FORMER* WISE IN FRIENDSHIPS...

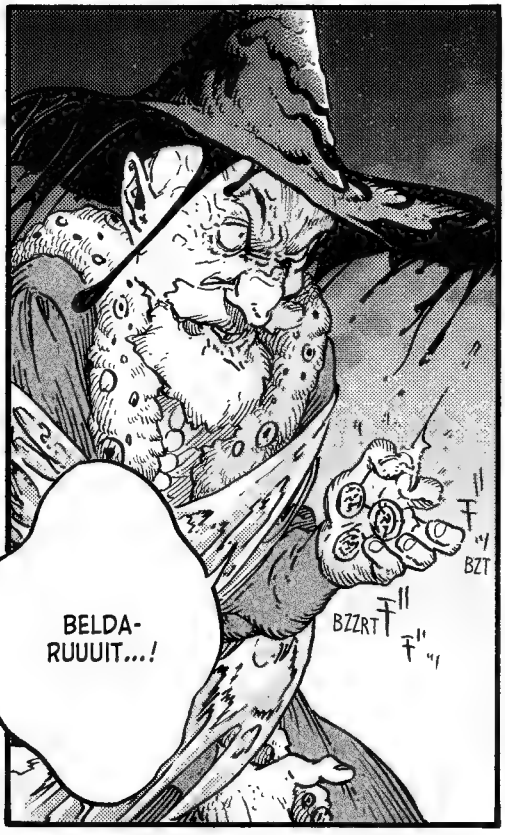
...IS THE FIRST DEATH WHAT CONVINCED YOU TO DON...
...THAT UNSIGHTLY NEW CAP OF YOURS?
HMPH.
DOES IT OFFEND YOU?
LET ME BE CLEAR. THE BRIM IS HAPPEN-STANCE.
IT SAYS NOTHING OF WHAT I AM OR WHO I STAND WITH.
I FASHIONED MY CAP FOR CONVENIENCE. BUT THIS TIME, INSTEAD OF REPELLING RAINWATER...
...IT KEPT FROM MY EYES THE BLOOD OF A GREAT FOOL WHO THOUGHT TO REFASHION HIS BODY.
!!
TO TRANSFORM HIMSELF WITH *MAGIC?!*

WHAT'S MORE, HE WAS A POINTED CAP! A PETTY CRIMINAL FROM AMONG OUR KIND!
YES! DO YOU SEE NOW?!
THIS GREAT VALANCE LEECH THAT ENVELOPS THE CITY WAS ONCE A MAN!
...ONLY TO EMERGE AS THE HORROR YOU SEE ABOVE US NOW.
HE SCRAWLED SEAL ON SKIN THINKING TO SLITHER FROM HIS CELL...
AT THE SIGHT OF IT, I MUST ADMIT I WAS SPELLBOUND. I FELT AS IF I'D BEEN GRANTED A GLIMPSE...
...OF HOW MONSTERS CAME TO BE IN DAYS OF YORE.
THE SPELL, YOU SEE... IT IS NOT AS STRAIGHT-FORWARD AS YOU MAY IMAGINE.
AS THE TRANSFORMATION PROCEEDS, IT WILL EAGERLY FUSE TWO INTO ONE.
TOUCH SEPARATE SPARKS OF LIFE TOGETHER, AND YOU WILL BE LEFT WITH SOMETHING THAT IS *BOTH* YET *NEITHER*.

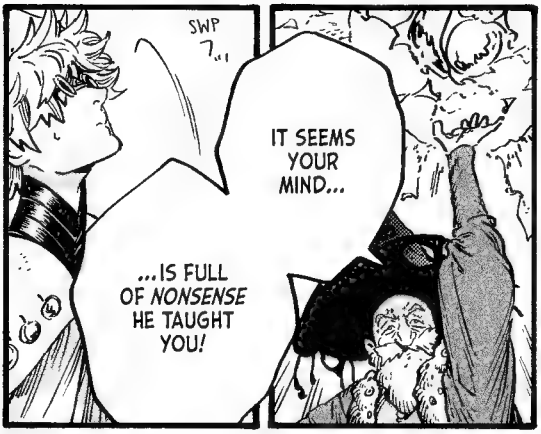
WR
WR
SPWRSH
ZSH
FSH
FSH
FSH
FSH
FSH
DOES THAT NOT SHOCK YOU? TO LEARN THAT THIS TERRIBLE LEECH...
...WAS IN FACT ONCE HUMAN?
KRKK
KK
SHAK

SPLUNK
SPLUNK
SPLUNK
...STOOP TO?!
...AT THE LOWS OTHER WITCHES...
DO YOU FEEL NO ALARM? NO DISGUST...
FWSH
KRAKK
IT IS THE WITCH HIMSELF...
...HOW CRUEL OUR KIND CAN BE.
AND THAT...
...WHO MOST NEEDS TO LOOK INWARD AND LEARN...

VSHH


BELDA-
RUUUIT...!
BZT
BZZRT

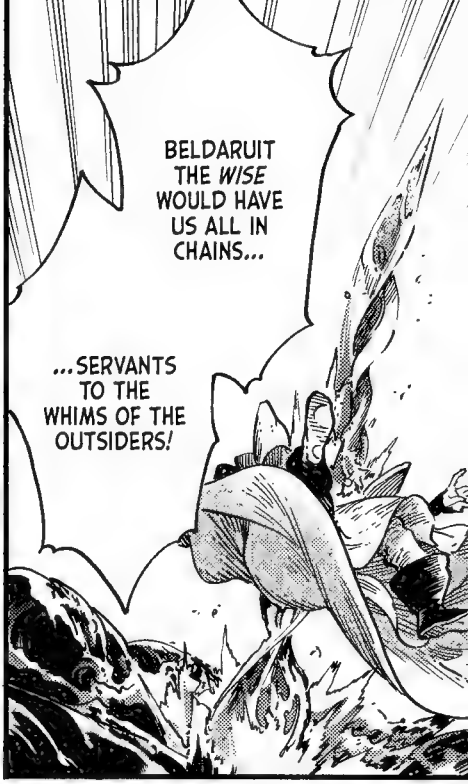
...IS A TRUTH PRESSED UPON ME BY MY MASTER.


SWP
...IS FULL OF *NONSENSE* HE TAUGHT YOU!
IT SEEMS YOUR MIND...

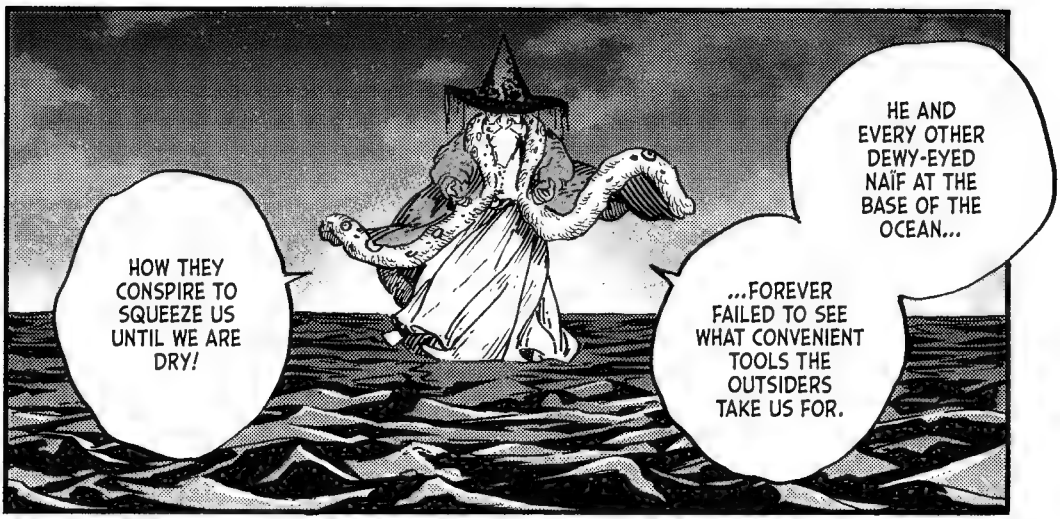
...LOUNGING IN HIS SEALCHAIR AS IF IT IS SOME MANNER OF *THRONE!*
FWSH
BLAST THAT BUFFOON, EVER STARING DOWN HIS NOSE...

SHRIIING
ボッ
BLUB
SHLRK
GNGH...!

"BRING THE BLESSING OF MAGIC TO ALL"...
"SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE WEAK"...


BELDARUIT THE *WISE* WOULD HAVE US ALL IN CHAINS...
...SERVANTS TO THE WHIMS OF THE OUTSIDERS!

MUCK IF I'VE EVER HEARD IT.


HOW THEY CONSPIRE TO SQUEEZE US UNTIL WE ARE DRY!
HE AND EVERY OTHER DEWY-EYED NAÏF AT THE BASE OF THE OCEAN...
...FOREVER FAILED TO SEE WHAT CONVENIENT TOOLS THE OUTSIDERS TAKE US FOR.

TO LINE OUR POCKETS WITH *TRIBUTE* FROM THE COMMON MAN!
POWER TO DEMAND *RESPECT* ON LAND!
WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH *POWER!*
TO CLAIM LIVES WITH NO NEED OF SWORDS!
...TO WARD OFF ILLNESS WITHOUT DEFERENCE TO DOCTORS!
LOCKED INSIDE US IS THE STRENGTH...
WITCHES ARE BLESSED WITH *POWER!*

...
AND YET WE CHAIN IT DOWN...
...WITH SILLY PRECEPTS ABOUT HOW IT MUST NEVER BE USED.

BWRSH
...PERHAPS I'D STILL HOLD MY TITLE. I COULD HAVE CONDUCTED THINGS MUCH MORE SENSIBLY...
FR.SPRSH.
ZSH
ZSH
... JUST HOW EASY IT WOULD BE TO SNUFF OUT A LIFE...
IF I'D ONLY KNOWN...
BLAST.

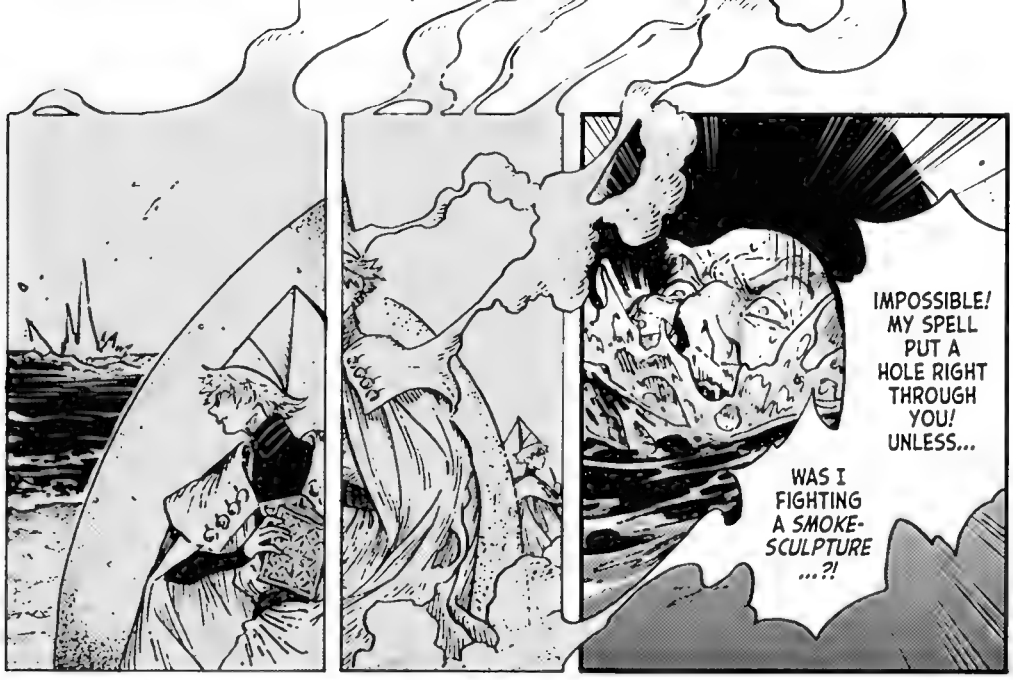
KNOW THIS, GIRL.
WITCHES HAVE THE POWER OF MAGIC.
PTTR
PTTR

HAD WE KEPT IT TO OURSELVES, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO OBVIOUS WE HELD THE LION'S SHARE.
...OF BALANCE BETWEEN OUR TWO GROUPS.
...WAS TO SUGGEST THE TINIEST SEMBLANCE...
SHHHK
...WE LEFT MEDICINE FOR THE OUTSIDERS TO CALL THEIR OWN...
AND THE ONLY REASON...
MAGIC GRANTS SWAY OVER JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING IMAGINABLE... EXCEPT LIFE ITSELF.
SO WE ALLOWED THEM TO CLUTCH THE MYSTERIES OF MORTALITY TO THEIR BREASTS...
...AND CLING TO THE BELIEF THAT THEIR KIND IS OF ANY CONSEQUENCE AT ALL.

...FROM THE BODY OF ONE TIRED, ACHING OLD MAN.
NOW THEY TELL ME THEY HAVE NO WAY TO CLEAR THE ILLNESS...
AND WHAT A WASTE THAT WAS.
...I MUST PAY EXORBITANT SUMS— MORE THAN ALL THE SPELLCASTING LEVIES COMBINED.
THEY TELL ME THAT TO PROLONG MY TIME VIA CONSTANT CARE FROM THEIR MOST SKILLED DOCTORS...
...TO GRANT THE ONES WHO LABOR TO FILL THEIR LIVES WITH BLESSINGS?
TELL ME. DOES THAT NOT SEEM A VERY MISERLY REWARD...
HMPH.
NOT THAT ANY OF IT MATTERS NOW.
SHIING

AMASSING GOLD IS NO CHALLENGE IF ONE DOES NOT SCRUTINIZE THE MEANS.
AND I AM NO LONGER BOUND.
FOR I...
RSH
ZWSH
...I WILL FIND MY WAY TO SURVIVE, EVEN IF THE PRICE I MUST PAY—
?!
FWIP
GASP
WH...?!

FRSH
TUMF
VR
VRSH
HOW CAN THIS BE?!


IMPOSSIBLE! MY SPELL PUT A HOLE RIGHT THROUGH YOU! UNLESS...
WAS I FIGHTING A *SMOKE-SCULPTURE* ...?!

YOU CAN THANK *MASTER BELDARUIT* FOR THAT ONE.

YES. HE'S LOUD, HE'S OBNOXIOUS, AND HE DOES WHATEVER HE WANTS.
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO MAGIC, YOU'D BE HARD PRESSED TO FIND A BETTER TEACHER.
KRACKLE
IT'S SET ALL MY SPELLS OFF AT ONCE!
SPELLBOUND, WERE YOU? AT THE THOUGHT OF WITNESSING A MONSTER TAKE SHAPE?
MY INK...! IT'S DISSOLVING AWAY!

CHAPTER 68 ♦ END

Witch Hat
Atelier